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THE

HISTORY OF FRANCE

UNDER

THE BOURBONS.

VOL. I.

THE

HISTORY OF FRANCE

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THE BOURBONS.

A.D. 1589—1830.

B. 2505

BY

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ETC. ETC.

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ERRATA.

P. 197, line 23; p. 198, l. 26; p. 199, l. 28; p. 201, l. 21, for Concinis, *read* Concini.

P. 347, line 32, for De Retz, *read* Gondi.

P. 351, line 11, for Sincela, *read* Siruela.

THE HISTORY

FRANCE UNDER THE BOURBONS.

CHAPTER I.

The reign of Henry IV. forms an epoch in the history of France; not only as being the period of the accession of a new dynasty, but as marking the termination of the religious wars, the most frightful of all the troubles which ever desolated the country, till the superior horrors of the Revolution of 1789 cast them and all others into the shade; and, as a necessary consequence, being also the period of the gradual restoration of tranquillity and prosperity, if we may not rather say, of the inauguration of both these blessings in a degree in which France had never previously enjoyed them. Yet, at first, it seemed as if Henry's accession were destined rather to perpetuate and to intensify the disorders and miseries of recent years, so greatly did his profession of the Reformed religion strengthen the pretexts on which the League had taken up arms against his predecessor, and encourage the hopes which the Duke de Mayenne had inherited from his brother, of making himself master of the kingdom and of the throne. Nor was it a

trifling difficulty in the way of Henry's establishing his authority on a secure and firm footing, that his relationship to the last king was so extremely distant that it was only very recently that the nation had learnt to look upon him as its future sovereign. His chance of the succession could hardly have been regarded as very probable till the death of the Duke d'Anjou, only five years before; and even then it seemed not impossible that Henry III. might yet have children to whom to transmit his royal dignity. But, to understand all the difficulties of his situation, it will be necessary briefly to trace the events of a few preceding years.

The last three kings of the House of Valois were brothers, sons of Henry II. and Catharine de Medici; and during almost the entire period of their reigns the real authority of the kingdom, as far at least as they were concerned, had rested in the hands of that ambitious, wily, and unscrupulous princess. During the brief reign of Francis II., she was indeed in some degree overborne by the influence of the Duke de Guise, the uncle of Francis's queen, the beautiful Mary of Scotland. But, when he died, in less than a year and a half after his father, his next brother, Charles IX., was but a child of ten years old, and there was no one to dispute her claims to the regency. And again, when, after a miserable and disgraceful reign of fourteen years, he was succeeded by Henry III., that prince, who was already king of Poland, was absent in his northern dominions; so that, in his case also, the appointment of a regent was indispensable, and naturally devolved upon Catharine; and the power, which was thus conferred upon her for a brief period, she in each case contrived to

retain permanently; encouraging both her sons in vice and debauchery, which unfitted them for business, though both were naturally endued with talents which, under a different discipline, might have qualified them to confer benefits on their country, and to earn an honourable fame for themselves. Catharine's character has been drawn by many writers, who have been unanimous in ascribing to her the possession of consummate ability, and almost equally so in imputing to her every kind of wickedness. But though her talents and vices were undoubtedly great, it may be that both have been in some degree overrated. She was skilled, indeed, in all feminine accomplishments, and was endowed, moreover, with a masculine strength of mind and resolution; but, as a politician, she had no higher aim than the preservation of her own power, and for that end she employed no means but such as are the resource of minds cunning rather than wise, playing one faction against another, intriguing with all, and trying to outwit all. That she in no respect contributed to the welfare of France is no impeachment of her talents, since that was a matter of indifference to her, nor did she apparently ever forget that she came of a nation and of a family that owed but little to the French; but her administration was ruinous to the happiness and reputation of her sons, for which she might have been expected to be more solicitous; and fatal also to the power of the last, who was always supposed to be her especial favourite; yet he, through her intrigues, and the encouragement which, from jealousy of his other councillors, she gave to his rebellious subjects, was not only driven from his capital, and forced to make peace with them on their own terms, but, when she died, seemed on the point

of losing even the semblance of power which was all that he had for some time possessed, and of being formally dethroned by the Duke de Mayenne.

At the same time, some abatement must also be made from the denunciations of those who represent her as a monster steeped in every kind of infamy and crime, and the sole cause of all the evils that for above thirty years afflicted France. Profoundly selfish, utterly faithless, and mercilessly indifferent to human life she certainly was, but the stories which impute to her such personal profligacy as stained the character of Louise of Savoy, and of her own daughter Margaret, are probably unfounded; and even of the great atrocity which, above all other transactions, has most darkened her reputation, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, she was not apparently the originator;* nor, indeed, was the design altogether without a precedent. Not to speak of the massacre of the Vaudois by Francis I., nearly equal to it in the extent of bloodshed, and even exceeding it in the horror of many of its circumstances, the great Constable Montmorenci, only a month or two after the Convention of Amboise had granted the Reformers amnesty for the past and indulgence for the future, had planned a massacre of all those of that persuasion in Paris,† and it was to the energetic measures which Catharine herself adopted, that the frustration of his intention was alone owing. In fact, she was naturally inclined to moderate measures, to craft rather than to force; and, in her preference of one religious party to the

* Brantôme, in his "Memoir of Coligny," imputes the original idea of the massacre of St. Bartholomew to the Marshal de Tavannes and the Comte de Retz.

† D'Anquetil, "Esprit de la Ligue," i. 206.

other, being guided mainly by considerations which had but little to do with religion, she was often inclined to protect and even to favour the Huguenots.* Many of her favourite ladies were of that persuasion, and the great man who was long her principal adviser, the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, had a Protestant for his wife, though it is apparently a mistake to suppose that he shared her belief. That, in 1564, she saved Henry of Navarre and his mother from a plot which had been laid to seize them and deliver them up to Philip of Spain, is indisputable;† and it is not inconsistent with this view of her character that, having baffled the plot, she forbore to punish the conspirators, or to institute any formal investigation into the matter. We must, therefore, while in no degree extenuating the crimes of which she was unquestionably guilty, or the callousness of feeling which displayed itself in every part of her career, show her memory so much mercy as to remember that she lived in a time when people held the lives of others, and their own likewise, far cheaper than, in our happier age, we can well conceive; and that deeds as bad as the worst that are imputed to her, were planned and perpetrated by others whose glory, in general estimation, they seem hardly to have tarnished.

There were at least two causes which contributed to make religious animosities more bitter in France than in most other countries. In the first place, there was

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* According to Sismondi (part vii. c. 15) the name Huguenot, which was first adopted by the Reformers during the reign of Francis II., had not originally any reference to religion; but came from the German *Eidgenossen*, the oath-takers—*i.e.*, Confederates; which a few years before had been assumed as their designation by the Liberal party in Geneva.

† D'Anquetil, i. 215.

no other land in which the Reformers and the adherents of the old religion were so nearly balanced in number as they appear to have been in France in the middle of the sixteenth century. When in 1560 Coligny presented to the Assembly of Notables at Fontainebleau a petition from his brother Huguenots, he affirmed that he could, within a few days, have easily procured 50,000 signatures to it; and the Duke de Guise admitted the correctness of his assertion, while professing to see in it only a menace to the king, and a proof of the danger which might arise from the toleration of so numerous a body. Two even of the prelates of the Church, Montluc, Bishop of Valence, and Marillac, Archbishop of Vienne, were notoriously inclined to the new doctrines, a feeling which was shared by a very large portion of the educated classes throughout the nation;* for the Reformation in France had this peculiarity also, that it worked downwards; that its first and most numerous adherents were made not among the humbler classes, but among the rich and fashionable; they, indeed, being those who had suffered most from the exactions and usurpations of the Catholic priesthood. The royal family itself furnished some converts. Queen Margaret,

* On a previous occasion Coligny had declared that there were two millions of Reformers capable of bearing arms (D'Anquetil, i. 46), and De l'Hôpital is said to have estimated the Reformers at a third of the whole nation; while Catharine, according to Sismondi, reckoned them at half the educated classes, or even more—"L'esprit manifesté par les états-generaux, malgré les efforts des Guises pour les peuples des fanatiques, avait fait conclure que la grande majorité dans la nation, tout parmi la noblesse que parmi ceux du tiers état qui avaient obtenu quelque education, était gagnée à la Réforme."—Sism., part vii. c. 16. Any estimate of this kind must be extremely loose, since the framers had no data for computing the numbers of the whole nation. And the results of the wars of this period clearly prove that the Huguenots must have been inferior in number to the Catholics, though far less so than in other countries.

sister of Francis I., had been a zealous protector of the new religion, and bred up her daughter, the mother of Henry IV., in it; it invaded even the nursery of Henry II., where the youthful Duke d'Anjou, afterwards Henry III., staunch Romanist as he became in his manhood, compelled his brothers and sisters to use Huguenot prayers, and to sing Marot's psalms. Secondly, among the chief princes and nobles, the contest between the two religions was also a struggle for political power. When the Prince de Condé competed with the Duke de Guise and Montmorenci for the chief administration of the kingdom, as he was a Protestant, and they were Catholics, an attack upon his religion was the most plausible and effectual way of silencing his pretensions, and setting the sovereign himself against him. His co-religionists naturally ranged themselves on his side; the Catholics, as a matter of course, espoused the other, and it was almost inevitable that two parties thus excited against one another by the most powerful considerations, both spiritual and temporal, should break out into hostilities.

Fortunately for his fame, the life and reign of Francis II. were too short for the impending rupture fully to develop itself; but the Duke de Guise, and his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who, as the uncles of his queen, obtained the ascendancy in his councils, showed, even in their few months of power, the lengths to which they would soon have driven him. The conspiracy of Amboise was, in reality, only a plot to deliver him from their hands, but the duke had the address to cause it to be regarded as an act of high treason against himself, and as such it was punished with merciless and undiscriminating cruelty. The brothers

went further: they planned the assassination of the King of Navarre, Condé's elder brother, and Guise bitterly reproached the youthful monarch for shrinking from so unprovoked a crime; and they succeeded in extorting his consent to the arrest of Condé himself, to a mock trial of the prince before an illegal tribunal, and to his condemnation, which would assuredly have been carried into effect, had not the execution been anticipated by the death of Francis. The accession of Charles IX., which formally placed the supreme power in the hands of the queen-mother as regent, soon exasperated the ill-feelings already in existence. At first she was inclined to ally herself to the Duke de Guise, who, of all the leading men, was by far the ablest; but when she found that he was tampering with Philip II. of Spain, who, always on the watch to profit by the embarrassments of his neighbours, was putting himself forward, unasked, as the protector of the kingdom, she saw the danger to her own power which might arise from such an union, and showed a disposition to transfer her favour to the Reformers. She recalled Condé to the Court, and appointed the King of Navarre Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, as a peace-offering to the States General, who had demanded that she should cede him the regency; and Guise, indignant, and perhaps alarmed, had quitted Paris, and retreated to the southern provinces, when an incident which had in reality no connexion with religion, revived his hopes, and again gave him the means of becoming formidable.

One of the last acts of Francis's reign had been the convocation of the States General* to Orleans, where

* English readers must recollect that the States General were the

they were on the point of assembling, when he died. After a short sitting, they were transferred to Paris, and there one of their first measures was to adopt a proposition to reclaim some of the excessive grants which of late years had been made to royal favourites. None had profited by this prodigality more largely than the notorious mistress of Henry II., Diana de Poitiers (Duchesse de Valentinois), the Marshal St.-André, and the Constable Montmorenci, who had hitherto from jealousy of Guise, and affection for his own kinsman Coligny, been a secret supporter of the Reformed party; but who now, being far more attached to his possessions than to his relations, and having at all times had military misgivings as to the propriety of differing from his sovereign in religion, listened eagerly to the suggestions of the Duchess and St. André, that a reconciliation with Guise afforded the only prospect of parrying the blow aimed at his wealth by the States; and the three soldiers united in an association known by the name of the Triumvirate, which speedily became the parent of a more extensive union, the Catholic League, for which its leaders were not ashamed publicly to solicit the protection of the foreigner Philip. Months of negotiation between the two parties followed, accompanied by apparent reconciliation between their chiefs, and edicts of mutual toleration, which, however, were more favorable to the Catholics than to the Reformers; while Catharine, according to her favourite policy, temporised between both. But

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assembly which, as far as the difference in the constitution of the two kingdoms would allow, resembled our British Parliament, and that the body (or rather bodies, for there were other parliaments besides that of Paris) which in France went by the name of the Parliament, was the chief court of justice.

it must have been clear to every one of the slightest political discernment, or insight into the character of the leaders, that the glowing embers of war were but thinly crusted over, when an accident suddenly kindled the flame over the whole kingdom. As the Duke de Guise was passing through Vassy, a small town on the frontier of Champagne, some of his servants picked a quarrel with a body of Protestants who were assembled in a barn listening to a favourite preacher. The duke, while endeavouring to quell the tumult, was struck in the face by a stone, on which his followers, who were all armed, attacked the unarmed multitude with their swords, and slew or severely wounded between two and three hundred. Catharine summoned Guise to Paris to explain his conduct: he set her at defiance, coming indeed, but coming at the head of a well-appointed troop of 1200 armed men, in kingly state, as D'Anquetil describes his entry; and the queen, fearing for her personal safety, threw herself for a moment into the arms of Condé and his party, writing to the prince to come to the rescue of herself and her child, the youthful king. Condé was willing enough to obey her invitation, but he found the citizens of Paris too much attached to the old religion, and to Guise, whom they looked on as its champion, for him to be able to make head against the duke in that city. He retired to Meaux, the head-quarters of the Protestants from the first dawn of the Reformation, and sent expresses to Coligny, and D'Andelot, his brother, to meet him in that city, for that "Cæsar had not only crossed the Rubicon, but had seized Rome, and was about to unfurl his standard." Catharine herself was preparing to meet him with the young king, but Guise and the King of Navarre (who had

been won over to the Catholic religion and the Triumvirate by the promise of the kingdom of Sardinia), were too quick for her, intercepting her at Fontainebleau, and carrying her and Charles back to Paris.

War now became the only resource: the first of eight religious wars, according to the French historians; but, in fact, one long war, interrupted by occasional feverish truces, during which but little real respite was given to the Reformers. In June, 1562, both sides took the field, with armies of near 10,000 men, Paris being the head-quarters of the Catholics; Orleans of Condé and his followers, who, if we may trust the account given of them by their friends,* in their discipline and ordinary habits resembled Cromwell's Ironsides, as they have been described by some of our own writers. In that singular camp "were seen no games of chance, no women of loose character, no plunderers. Oaths were rigorously forbidden; instead of songs, the soldiers chanted psalms; every morning and evening prayer was offered up at stated hours, and often during the day the ministers of religion, mixing with the troops, would address them with pious discourse and devout exhortations." The writer from whom we quote completes the parallel when he adds that "this rejection of all light amusement, this prohibition of all discourse but serious conversation and vehement sermons, inspired the men with a stern and ferocious zeal, rendering every trooper a fanatic, who thought himself at liberty to practise the greatest atrocities in support of his religion."

Each party professed to be fighting for the king. The Catholics, because he was among them; the

* Beza and others, quoted by D'Anquetil, i. 159.

Huguenots, because their object was to deliver him from the constraint in which the Catholics were keeping him. Foreign sovereigns, too, hoped to find their account in the war; and, putting themselves forward as allies of one party or the other, to discover a pretext for introducing their armies into France. Philip was eager to reinforce Guise; Elizabeth of England offered, and after a time sent succour to the Protestants. From the first commencement of active operations it was plain that the Protestants were overmatched. Rouen, their chief stronghold in the north, was taken by storm, though the death of the King of Navarre, who was in the besieging army, was some compensation for the loss of so important a place, since it removed the appearance of divisions in the Bourbon family, as his widow, Jeanne d'Albret, now openly announced her adhesion to the Reformers, and threw herself and her young son, Henry of Navarre, entirely into their hands. It is true that Dreux, in which, singularly enough, the commanders-in-chief on each side, Condé and the Constable, were both taken prisoners, and in which St. André was killed, may be looked upon as a drawn battle, if the advantage was not even on the side of the Huguenots; they certainly lost fewer men than the royal army: and indeed, if they had not, by a disorderly pursuit of their flying enemies, given Guise an opportunity of falling on their rear, they would have gained a decisive victory. But this was the only instance of the kind; and in the second period of the war, in the battles of St. Denis, of Jarnac, and finally, of Montcontour, they sustained undeniable and important defeats. Neither the death of Guise, who was assassinated while besieging D'Andelot in Orleans, nor that of the Constable, who

fell at St. Denis, produced any effect favorable to them. In some respects they had reason even to deplore the death of Guise, who, though the ablest of their enemies, and a man of overbearing and violent temper, was of a more honorable and chivalrous disposition than most of those engaged in this sanguinary strife, often protecting, to the best of his power, his defeated foes from the excited passions of his own soldiers; thus, as far as might be, mitigating the horrors of war. He was treacherously shot in the back by Poltrot, a Protestant of gentle birth, who, as such, had been occasionally employed by Coligny to procure him intelligence, and who, when examined under torture, imputed the original suggestion of his crime to the Admiral. He subsequently recanted the charge, though the new Duke de Guise professed to believe his original statement rather than his recantation. But the widow of the murdered prince, and his brother the Cardinal of Lorraine,* admitted the Admiral's innocence; and undoubtedly such a crime was inconsistent with his general character, which was one of uncompromising frankness, and a sincere piety untinctured with fanaticism. It is certain, however, that, after it had been committed, he flattered himself with the hope that it would be of great advantage to his party, and severely reproached Condé and all those concerned in concluding the Convention of Amboise, which was one of the consequences of it, as having thus thrown away the prospects of success which the removal of so formidable an enemy had opened to them.

This convention was chiefly the work of Catharine

* D'Anquetil, i. p. 230.

herself, who, partly perhaps from jealousy of the Guises (the new duke being also a man of eminent talents, more ambitious, and far more unscrupulous than his father), was most anxious for peace. It promised the Huguenots amnesty for the past and toleration for the future; and, had it been fairly executed, it might have restored permanent tranquillity to the kingdom; but all the worst passions of the Catholics had now been roused to such a pitch of fanaticism that they looked upon the slightest indulgence shown to the Reformers as an attack upon their own religion. And there was no authority in the kingdom powerful enough to compel them to respect the provisions of a treaty which secured the very slightest privileges to a body whom they both hated and despised. Pope Pius IV. seemed almost to justify their worst rancour when, in the course of the summer, he excommunicated a number of the Huguenot chiefs, and among them the Queen of Navarre herself; while Montmorenci, as has been already mentioned, proposed to make the excommunication superfluous by a general massacre. Exposed to such treatment and to such dangers, it was not strange that the Protestants again had recourse to arms, to meet, however, with worse fortune than before. They failed in an attempt to surprise the king and his mother at Monceaux, near Meaux; and when Charles escaped to Paris, they failed again in an attempt on the city itself. The battle of St. Denis followed; and the treaty of Longjumeau, *la paix boiteuse et malassise*,* as it was called by the wits of the Court, scarcely produced the

* They gave it this name because of the two diplomatists who drew up the treaty on the part of the Court: one, Marshal Biron, was lame, (*boiteux*); the other, M. de Mesmes, was seigneur de Malassise.

slightest cessation of hostilities. It is even said that Catharine herself alleged that it had only been intended as a blind to induce Condé and Coligny to disband their troops. Some of her chief officers certainly did say so; and, in fact, she still retained her foreign regiments from Switzerland and Italy. The Catholic clergy, too, exerted themselves to excite their flocks to disregard the treaty, inveighing against it* from the pulpit, and unblushingly declaring that faith was not to be kept with heretics. And, in unison with these abominable maxims, as the honest D'Anquetil rightly calls them, the Huguenots in every province of the kingdom were now exposed to open persecution and to secret assassination, till the number who were put to death in the short space of three months was estimated at seven or eight thousand. Catharine, now entirely devoted to the Catholic party, even tried to seize the two chiefs, Condé and Coligny; but they received timely notice of their danger, escaped to Rochelle, and again raised the standard of open war. In their own opinion they had never had so fair a chance of success; for the oppressions of the last three months had shown their adherents that there was no safety but in victory; and those who were capable of bearing arms flocked from all parts to join the army; till at last Condé found himself at the head of a force equal to any that could be brought against him.

The royal army was now placed nominally under the command of the king's next brother, then Duke d'Anjou, who, as Henry III., afterwards succeeded him on the throne; and who, though only seventeen years

* D'Anquetil, i. 273.

old, was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom. He was attended by Marshal Tavannes, with whom of course the real management of operations rested. And in the spring of 1569 they surprised Condé at Jarnac, on the Charente, and brought him to action at a time when he had scarcely any troops with him but a portion of his cavalry. The evening before the prince had one arm disabled by a fall, and on the morning of battle one of his legs was broken by a horse's kick; yet even in this helpless state he led on his forces with all his usual intrepidity, till he and, they were overwhelmed by numbers. He was taken prisoner, and murdered in cold blood by an officer named Montesquiou, the captain of the Swiss guards. His loss was an irreparable injury to his party; and, six months afterwards, the same commanders overthrew Coligny and his whole army in a pitched battle at Montcontour, the numbers on each side being greater than in any previous battle, and the victory in consequence more decisive. One event alone afforded the Huguenots any prospect of ever again making head against their enemies. As the death of Condé had deprived them of any leader of royal blood, the Queen of Navarre thought that such a calamity called on her to exert herself for the maintenance of her family influence; accordingly she repaired to Saintes, then the head-quarters of Coligny and the other chiefs of the party, accompanied by her son, and, though he was but sixteen, offered him to the assembled warriors as their future head. The young prince was prompt and resolute beyond his years. Coming forward into the midst of the company, by a seasonable vow to "defend the reformed religion, and to persevere in the common cause till

death or victory procured for them all the freedom which they sought,"* he excited them to an unanimous enthusiasm in his favour, and they proclaimed him their generalissimo. In this capacity he was present at Montcontour, though the admiral, who of course had still the real command, greatly to his discontent, kept him in safety at a distance from the battle. And he also accompanied Coligny in the celebrated retreat across France, by which, after that fatal defeat, he baffled the pursuit of the victorious enemy. The royal army certainly did not make the most of the decisive victory which they had gained, an error which is imputed to the jealousy which the king began to entertain of his brother, who was reaping glory in the war, while he himself was kept in inactivity. From whatever cause it arose, the supineness of the Catholic generals was so great for some months, that, in the course of the next summer, La Noue, one of the most enterprising of the Huguenot officers, gained several advantages over them in Poitou; and at Arnai le Duc, Coligny himself, with less than 5000 men, repelled an attack of Marshal Cossé with nearly thrice his numbers. There was nothing, however, sufficiently substantial in these trifling successes to afford the Huguenots any hope of prosecuting the war with success. Coligny being at last fully awakened to this truth, became anxious for peace; and, as Catharine was beginning to entertain suspicions of more than one of the royalist generals, and especially of the Duke de Guise, she was equally desirous to deprive them of their authority by termi-

* D'Anquetil, i. 293; Perefixe, i. 25, less accurately places this occurrence *before* the battle of Jarnac.

nating the war. When the chiefs on each side were thus agreed, peace was easily concluded, and the terms granted to the Huguenots were more favorable than they could have expected from the events of the war, so favorable indeed, that, when compared with the atrocious attack upon them made exactly two years afterwards, it was believed by many that this peace had been designed chiefly to throw them off their guard and so to facilitate their destruction: a surmise for which there appears no sufficient foundation, and which seems contradicted by many undoubted facts.

It is neither easy nor worth while to unravel the intrigues, and jealousies, and vacillations of the next two years; but, however inconsistent towards others, the queen-mother and the king were uniformly conciliatory to the Queen of Navarre and her son, and soon proposed to cement their reconciliation by giving the Princess Margaret, the king's sister, in marriage to the young prince, with a magnificent dowry of 400,000 crowns. There were difficulties on both sides to be got over; but they were all surmounted. In the spring of 1572 Henry of Navarre came to the Court, where he, and all the rest of the Huguenot leaders, were treated with marked cordiality. The horrors which followed we need only glance at. On the 18th of August the prince and princess were married, the wedding having been delayed some weeks in consequence of the death of Henry's mother, the Queen of Navarre, which took place at the beginning of June. Two days afterwards a great debate was held in the king's council whether he should be included in the massacre of his whole party, which was fixed for the next morning; and it was with some

difficulty that Charles and Catharine overruled the importunity of the Duke de Guise, who had an especial reason for desiring Henry's destruction, inasmuch as he was himself deeply in love with his bride, and had hoped to become her husband.

Happily, we are not called on here to dwell* on the atrocities of St. Bartholomew's Day, when the whole of France was deluged with innocent blood, and that not of Protestants only, for many Catholics also who by any imprudence had provoked, or by any abundance of wealth had tempted those who held the chief sway among the assassins, were included in the massacre, to appease the anger or satisfy the cupidity of their murderers. Henry of Navarre, as we have said, was spared; but he saved his life at the expense of his conscience. Before the massacre began Charles had been evidently indisposed to interfere with his religious convictions; but, like a tiger, he was made fiercer by the sight of the blood which he was shedding. It was shortly after midnight when the tolling of the great bell of the palace gave the signal for the commencement of the slaughter, and before daybreak he sent a body of his archers of the guard to summon the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé to his presence; and, with fury in his countenance and voice, declared that "they were bound to teach others by their example to reverence him as the image of God,"† and to obey his commands; and that, "if they refused

* We will rather follow the example of De Thou, who abstains from all detail, saying—

"Excidat illa dies ævo, ne postera credant
Sæcula; nos certe taceamus, et obruta multâ
Nocte tegi propriæ patiamur crimina gentis."

† Sully, Book I.

to go to mass, he would at once treat them as guilty of high treason." Henry was convinced that he had no other alternative but either to be put to death or to go to mass; and he was never at any time of his life bigoted to either form of religion. He complied with Charles's command, and carried his obedience so far as, a week or two later, not only to write a letter to the Pope disavowing the doctrines of the Reformation, and imputing his former adoption of them to his youth and ignorance, but also to issue an edict to his subjects in Béarn and Navarre forbidding the practice of divine worship according to the Calvinistic form throughout his dominions, and depriving those who adhered to it of all State employments.

But, beyond saving his life, this extraordinary complaisance produced him no advantage. The treachery and barbarity with which they had been treated naturally drove all the Huguenots who had survived St. Bartholomew's Day into a renewal of the war, and, as they had no army capable of taking the field, nor any acknowledged leader of high military skill, they took refuge in Rochelle, resolved to maintain themselves to the death in that city, and defended it with vigour and success against a powerful army which the Duke d'Anjou at once led against them. So stout and effectual was their resistance, that, in the course of the next summer, the Court was reduced to make peace with them. But this peace was of shorter duration than any of the preceding; in fact, it may be said never to have had any practical effect at all, since in the western and southern provinces the Huguenots never laid down their arms for a moment, but steadily maintained their warlike attitude. In such a state of things Charles, or, we should rather say, Catharine, not unnaturally sus-

pected that Henry would willingly again put himself at the head of the Huguenots; and accordingly, though professedly reconciled to him, they kept him in what was little better than a state of absolute confinement. It was but on rare occasions that he was even allowed the attendance of his own household, and he was at all times rigorously watched by the king's guards. Condé, who had followed his example in conforming to the king's religion, was no better treated, except that he was allowed to retire to Amiens, from which, being less closely watched than his cousin at Paris, he contrived to escape. He reached the German frontier in safety; and, having disavowed his forced renunciation of Protestantism, he was again gladly received as one of the chiefs of the Huguenot party.

The jealousies between the different parties at Court had at all times been a great assistance to the Huguenots, by crippling the exertions which otherwise might have been made to subdue them; and after the massacre of St. Bartholomew they rose to a greater height than ever, dividing the members of the royal family itself against one another. Charles, as has been already mentioned, was jealous of the renown of his brother Henry, who, however, was Catharine's favourite; but the quarrels between them were terminated by the election of Henry to the throne of Poland. He accepted the dignity with undissembled reluctance. Catharine was still more unwilling to part with him than he was to go; and Charles even believed that she endeavoured to poison himself, to prevent the necessity for his brother's departure. It is an evil characteristic of the time that there was scarcely any one, however exalted in position or general character, against whom accusations of

this sort were not launched. The death of Jeanne d'Albret had been imputed to poison, which was said to have been administered to her by Catharine's perfumer in a pair of gloves; nor is the idea discountenanced by Davila, though generally favorable to the queen-mother, but it is rejected by French historians* who had certainly no tenderness for Catharine's memory; and we, too, may safely disregard it; and having done so, we may feel still less hesitation in acquitting her of the yet blacker crime of tampering with the life of her own son. But the quarrels in the royal family did not cease with the departure of Prince Henry. His brother Francis, previously known as the Duke d'Alençon,† but who now exchanged that title for the higher one of Duke d'Anjou, which had, as it were, become vacant, began to regard the king and his mother with such suspicion and ill-will, which were fully returned by her, that, though a Catholic, he began to treat with the Huguenots to receive him as their leader, and eventually he fled from the Court, and joined them; but before he executed this scheme Charles was dead. However confident the tone in which that unhappy prince had justified the massacre to the Parliament, he could not impose on himself. He soon began to reflect on his conduct with daily increasing remorse, in all probability the real cause of the illness which was imputed to poison; and in May, 1574, he died in great agony of body and mind, publicly appointing his mother regent till the return of his brother Henry from Poland, but privately showing the greatest repugnance to her,

* By Sully and Perefixe.

† Francis was the Duke d'Anjou who was proposed as a husband for our Queen Elizabeth.

and with almost his dying breath intimating the gravity of the suspicion and dread with which he regarded her,* by recommending the protection of his wife and only daughter to Henry of Navarre.

The accession of the new king, in spite of his military renown, had no influence on the Huguenot war. Of late his disposition changed, and he now gave himself up entirely to the most effeminate indolence and the most profligate licentiousness, while the condition of the kingdom became more miserable than ever. No longer brave, Henry had become ferocious, with that worst kind of ferocity which takes pleasure in the inactive contemplation of deeds of blood. He delighted to feast his mind on tales of treachery and murder, with which he expected his courtiers to regale his ears; and such deeds became now more rife and more odious in their details than at any former time. Meanwhile, the Huguenots grew daily more formidable. First they were joined by Condé, then by D'Anjou, and presently by Marshal Damville also, a son of the old Constable Montmorenci, who, though himself a Catholic, had his zeal for his religion overpowered by his detestation of Catharine and her Italian councillors, and his jealousy of Guise. He was at the head of a party known as the Politics, as being avowedly influenced by considerations of present policy; and his assistance would have been of great value had it been possible to rely on his steadiness. At last the King of Navarre himself, on the occasion of a hunting party at St. Germain, eluded

* Louis XIII. expressed to Bassompierre his belief that Charles's death was caused by his mother. "Si par la persuasion de Maréchal de Retz qui le fit detourner à Monceaux, auprès de la reine sa mère, il n'y fut pas revenu, il ne fut pas mort si tôt."—Mem. de Bass., p. 154.

the vigilance of those who were employed to watch his movements, and escaped to Guienne, where he resumed his natural position as chief of the Reformers, renewing also his profession of adhesion to the Protestant doctrine; and the importance attached to his movements may be estimated from the fact that Catharine saw no better course open to her than at once to make peace with him and the other princes, almost on their own terms. The new peace only aggravated the war. The Protestant princes had been too fatally warned of the unquenchable enmity which the dominant party at Court felt towards them, and of the treachery with which they were prepared to carry out their objects, ever again to trust themselves in their power; while the conditions of the treaty were received with such discontent by the greater number of the Catholic party, that Guise, who to considerable talents added still greater ambition, found it easy to form a new association, to which the name of the Catholic League, or more briefly, the League, was again given. The most important parts of the oath which was taken by every associate bound him "implicitly, and without any exception of deed or person, in all things to obey the chief," who, of course, was Guise himself, and "to defend every member of the League, even by force of arms, against every person whatever." It often happens that bodies of men, as well as individuals, are, by the course of events, drawn on to conceive designs and to perform actions which originally were far from their minds. But, in the case of the League, that which subsequently seemed its secondary object, the deposition of the king, and the elevation of Guise to the throne, was its real aim from the very first, and the profession of

zeal for the Catholic religion which it put forward was partly a blind to hide that purpose from those whose safety it threatened, and partly a bait to allure the enthusiasts for religion to join it. Application was made to the reigning Pope, Gregory XIII., for his sanction to the projected change of dynasty; and Guise sent a lawyer named David to Rome, who in an elaborate memorial demonstrated to his Holiness that all the evils that of late had afflicted France were caused by the Divine indignation at the usurpation of Hugh Capet, which was now at length falling upon his descendants, the race of Valois; and that the proper remedy was to call to the throne the family of Lorraine, the descendants of Charlemagne, in the person of Henry of Guise, the head of that family.* The memorial had hardly been delivered when it came to the knowledge both of Henry's ambassador in Spain and of some of the Huguenot leaders, each of whom transmitted a copy of it to him. And it is a curious proof of the timidity which had grown upon him, that he dared not avow his knowledge, and seize and punish his traitorous subject, but that he saw no other way of escape from the dangers with which he was threatened than that of baffling the project of the League by joining it himself, and becoming its chief; as if so great an enterprise as that which Guise had undertaken was to be frustrated, or so ambitious and resolute a politician to be tricked into the abandonment of a long-cherished scheme by a verbal quibble or a transparent artifice.

In the midst of this disorder and intrigue the States General assembled at Blois. The Catholics had

* D'Anquetil, ii. 180.

wrought upon Henry to convoke them, hoping, in the discussions that would arise, to find a protest to justify the formation of the League. A party also among the Protestants had been eager for such a measure, flattering themselves that the concessions which had been made to them at the last peace would be established on a surer footing; while Henry's, or rather Catharine's, consent had been won chiefly by the facility which the impending discussions would furnish them for estimating the relative strength of the two parties. The result of the debates proved entirely adverse to the Huguenots; in fact, a resolution that the king should be entreated to unite all Frenchmen in one form of worship, which was carried by a large majority, was practically a declaration of war against them. But the circumstance which, with reference to subsequent history, makes this meeting of the States General remarkable and important, is that, when the Huguenots, finding, no doubt, how greatly they should be overpowered in the Assembly, entered objections against the validity of the proceedings, one point on which they most strenuously insisted was that "the three States were all united in the same chamber,"* which they maintained to be both illegal and unconstitutional. We shall see hereafter that the question whether they should sit in one or more chambers was that on the decision of which, in 1789, the whole subsequent course of the great Revolution mainly turned.

The Assembly had voted war, but the Protestants were more prepared for it than the Catholics. The resolution was instantly followed by a proclamation of

* Sismondi, vii. 24, quoting D'Aubigné.

the King of Navarre, inviting the nobles of Guienne to take up arms, and his invitation was acted on with such vigour, that a force was at once raised which made itself master of several strong places in that province; but of the Catholics no one was ready to act with equal promptitude. The king had in reality no desire to adopt a policy which must contribute to the aggrandizement of Guise; and he had a plea ready to his hand for deferring it—"he had no money."* This excuse was notoriously true, indeed short of the truth; for he was overwhelmed with debt. The States themselves were unwilling to grant him money, except on conditions which would have reduced the royal authority to a phantom; and the sole result of this meeting of the great council of the kingdom was once more, with scantier resources than ever, to engage the Court in war for an object which, under far more favorable circumstances, had been proved to be unattainable.

It can hardly be said that the king himself wished the war to succeed. The Huguenots were now far weaker in military resources than formerly, and there were divisions among their chiefs. Condé, not without reason, distrusted both his Catholic allies, D'Anjou and Damville, the first of whom did in fact desert the Huguenots before the war begun, and took the command of the powerful army sent against them; and the second was secretly negotiating with the Court and preparing to follow his example; while the King of Navarre remained in Guienne, taking no part in any operations beyond that province, and in truth occupying himself chiefly with the cares of his own

* D'Anquetil, ii. 189.

little kingdom, and with affairs of gallantry, which at all times divided his attention with politics, and indeed often engrossed the chief share of it. The consequence was that D'Anjou and the Duke de Mayenne, Guise's brother, to whom Henry entrusted his second army, gained great advantages over Condé, and were seriously threatening Rochelle itself; when the king, at last perceiving clearly how much more he had to fear from Guise than from any other quarter, resolved on once more making peace with the Huguenots; and, as he offered them terms more favorable than had formerly been granted to them, they were readily agreed to. In September, 1577, a treaty in conformity with them was signed at Bergerac, and Henry flattered himself that he had at last secured permanent tranquillity in that quarter. He had a right to hope so; for, excepting that the Reformers were interdicted from the public practice of their religion within ten leagues of Paris, and that they were bound to pay tithes to the established priesthood, they were in all other important respects placed as nearly as possible on a footing of equality with their Catholic countrymen. The truth was that the king, though averse to the doctrines of the Reformers, had regarded with still greater displeasure and alarm their fierce fondness and aptitude for war, and their stubborn resolution, and was anxious now to conciliate them in order to avail himself of those qualities against the enemy, who was far more dangerous to his throne than they. He was deficient in no kind of ability, neither in military nor political talents; and he had learnt from Machiavelli, who was his favourite author, that the surest way to deliver himself from difficulties such as those by which he had hitherto been surrounded, was to play one faction

against the other, till he had established his throne on the ruin of both; and, having decided on this policy, he and Catharine, with whose disposition it was in entire harmony, followed it out with unusual steadiness.

He was jealous, too, of his brother D'Anjou, as Charles had been of himself when he bore the same title, and with greater justice; for that prince, not contented with the chances of a peaceful succession to the throne, if Henry should prove childless, had begun to conceive the idea of supplanting him in his lifetime, and was notoriously labouring to bring him into disrepute by drawing general attention to the scenes of scandalous and effeminate licentiousness with which the Court was daily disgraced. The king, deeply offended, at last went at midnight and, at the head of his Scottish guard, himself arrested the duke; but Catharine and his sister, the Queen of Navarre, who had not been allowed to join her husband, but was still with the Court, reconciled the brothers, and after a time D'Anjou, having successfully negotiated with the Flemings, who were in urgent need of foreign assistance, to enable them to maintain their revolt against the military genius of Don John, and being promised the sovereignty of Flanders, turned all his attention to the affairs of that country. For a moment he allowed himself to be diverted to a still higher object, a marriage with Elizabeth of England, who had listened so favorably to his proposals that she had even supplied him with money (of which no sovereign was ever less liberal), to aid his schemes in Flanders, and had authorised the drawing up of a formal treaty of marriage. And, thus encouraged, in 1581, he disbanded the greater part of his army, and crossed over to England; but, though she had committed herself

more than usual, when the time came Elizabeth could not make up her mind to admit any partner of her authority; she broke off the match, and he returned to Flanders, where, however, he succeeded so ill against the great Duke of Parma, who, on the death of Don John, in 1578, had succeeded to the command of the Spanish armies, that he was forced to abandon that object of ambition too. He returned to France, and was entirely reconciled to his brother.

For between two and three years the peace of Bergerac kept the leaders of the Huguenots quiet; but in several of the remote provinces, and especially in the south, it rather increased the misery of the people; since numbers of adventurers who, while formal war lasted, had been serving in the Protestant armies, now formed themselves into bodies of banditti, plundering both parties indiscriminately. But at the beginning of 1580 the leaders themselves renewed the war in a manner that did them but little credit. Their motives were vicious, their conduct of it was feeble, and it nearly produced the entire ruin of their cause. The year before Catharine, seriously alarmed at the intrigues of the Guises, which were carried on with increased boldness and openness, had conceived the idea that the best chance of counteracting them lay in reconciling the two Henrys; and with this view she repaired to Nerac, where Henry of Navarre was holding his court, accompanied by his queen, Margaret, and a brilliant train of the fairest dames of Paris. Nerac at once became a scene of dissipation little less extravagant than that which they had left behind them. Henry began to make love to his fair visitors, and Margaret, who was, if possible, even more licentious than himself, condescended to act as the go-between in his scandalous intrigues, on the understood condition

that he was to show her similar indulgence. One of her most favourite lovers was the Viscount de Turenne, and things were going on quietly enough when her brother, the King of France, who, for some discreditable reason or other, was not pleased to see her and her husband on such friendly terms, sent him notice of Turenne's success. The matter was so notorious, and the character of every one concerned had long been equally so, that it does not seem very clear why this piece of mischief-making should have produced any effect; but it did. Henry resented having his disgrace published; and Margaret, and all the other ladies who had followed her example, were furious. They insisted on their lovers proving that they deserved their favour, by avenging their injuries by war. Condé, who was not implicated in these amorous intrigues, but who was offended at the obstacles interposed by the Court, in spite of the treaty of Bergerac, to his entering on his government of Picardy, had already taken up arms, and made himself master of La Fére; and, encouraged by his success, Henry of Navarre, and the other captains assembled at Nerac, without the slightest pretext, plunged again into war, the war of the lovers, as it was contemptuously called. If by engaging in hostilities on such ground, Henry did not raise his reputation as a statesman, by his conduct of them he failed equally to raise it as a warrior. He did, indeed, surprise Cahors, which, though properly a part of his wife's dowry, was held by a royal garrison; but that was his only success. The King of France behaved with great temper and judgment, issuing an edict by which he confirmed all the privileges granted to the Protestants by the treaty of Bergerac, and sending powerful armies under the Duke de Mayenne and the Marshals Biron and Matignon against the insurgents.

Matignon recovered La Fére; Biron drove Henry before him in Guienne; and Mayenne crushed the revolt in the centre of the kingdom. Before the end of the year Condé had fled to England, and the King of Navarre was forced to accept peace, which, greatly to the credit of the moderation which governed the councils of the Court, did not retrench the concessions which had been made at Bergerac. The conclusion of the war, and the events which followed, especially the death of D'Anjou, which happened about the same time, and which left Henry of Navarre the next heir to the throne, increased the activity with which Guise laboured to excite the discontent of the nation in general against his sovereign, whose unpopularity was greatly augmented by the exactions to which his pecuniary embarrassments drove him, in order to procure money for his ordinary expenses. At last, thinking the people in general fully ripe for such an enterprise, and being encouraged by a formal treaty of alliance with Philip of Spain, Guise openly raised the standard of revolt, made himself master of Verdun and Lyons, won over Orleans, Angers, and other important places, and terrified the king into concluding a disgraceful treaty with him, by which he engaged to recall all the concessions which he had made to the Reformers, and to commence hostilities against them. This emergency roused Henry of Navarre, and, almost for the first time, prompted him to a line of conduct really worthy of his birth, his position, and his future expectations. He was fortunate in sagacious and honest councillors, Duplessis Mornay, and M. de Rosny, better known by his subsequent title of Duke de Sully. With their assistance, he drew up and published more than one able memorial, in which he fully refuted most of

the charges which had been advanced against the Huguenots, and against himself, and in which it is remarkable that he likewise showed a willingness to be reconciled to the Church of Rome, a step of which he probably began to perceive the political expediency. At the same time he strengthened himself for the wars which he saw to be inevitable, by an union with the Duke de Montmorenci, who, though a strict Catholic, was a personal enemy of Guise; and the king and the League sought allies also. They obtained troops from Germany, and prevailed on Sextus V., who had recently succeeded to the papal chair, to issue a bull of excommunication against Henry of Navarre and all his adherents. Henry of Navarre replied to this also, publishing a fierce denunciation of the Pope, as an "adversary of God, a parricide of the Christian Church, a wicked enemy of all religion, in short, the real Antichrist;" and fearlessly armed to meet the attack prepared against him. Yet even now, in spite of his engagements to the League, Henry of France faltered in his purpose, and sent the Cardinal of Lorraine to his brother of Navarre, to persuade him to meet the queen-mother in a conference, which might, he hoped, lead to the re-establishment of peace. It is probable that he was sincere in the overture thus made, since victory to his side could only have led to the aggrandisement of Guise, the danger which, of all others, he had the greatest reason to dread. And the King of Navarre, on his part, saw the impolicy of offending him by a refusal, since such a step might injure his own prospect of the succession to the throne, which the decay of Henry III.'s health rendered imminent. The conference took place, but came to nothing. It was rather a keen encounter

of the wits of the parties concerned, in lively, and not always acceptable repartee. Catharine, who seems now to have contemplated the eventual accession to the throne of the King of Navarre, much as she had formerly disliked the notion, as a slighter evil than the usurpation of Guise, was apparently sincere in her desire that he should return to Catholicism, as the sole means of reconciling the nation at large to his reign, while he, equally looking on the choice between the two forms of religion as a question of policy, was convinced that his wisest plan was for the present to avoid taking a step which would alienate the Huguenots, who must be his chief supporters, without conciliating the Catholics.

The war broke out, and the King of Navarre began to display far greater military talents than he had before given any specimen of. The Duke de Joyeuse was placed in command of the army sent against him, and Henry availed himself of his more accurate knowledge of the district which had become the scene of operations, by a rapidity of movement such as had hardly been seen in modern times. Though inferior in numbers to his opponents, he gained repeated advantages over different detachments, and took by surprise town after town before Joyeuse suspected that they were in danger. These manœuvres were repeated so often that some of the duke's detractors began to hint that he had not the courage to put himself in Henry's way; and Joyeuse was so stung with this taunt that he requested leave of the king to engage Navarre in a pitched battle. He obtained the permission, and ruined his party. The two commanders met at Coutras, between the rivers Dronne and De l'Isle. Henry had with him 6800

men; Joyeuse at least 4000 more: and, when he saw his antagonist in position between the two rivers, he conceived that he had caught him in a trap, and declared that not one of his army would escape. And again, when, from a distance, he perceived the Huguenots first kneeling before their ministers in prayer, and then chanting a psalm; like Edward at Bannockburn, he fancied he saw in their prostration before God an acknowledgment of their inability to cope with himself. He was rudely undeceived. In the battle which ensued Henry displayed the skill of a veteran tactician and the headlong bravery of a common trooper. Rosny, who commanded his artillery, it consisted of but three guns, worked it with great judgment and great rapidity. In less than an hour Joyeuse's army was utterly routed, and he himself slain, with between three and four thousand of his followers. His standards, his guns, his baggage, and other booty, to the value of not less than 600,000 crowns, fell into the power of the conqueror. Had not a wretched intrigue with the Comtesse de Guiche seduced the conqueror to quit his army to lay the spoils of his victory at her feet, the war must have been finished by that single blow.

As formerly the defeat of Montmorenci, when contrasted with the successes of the Duke de Guise's father, had increased the popularity of that prince, so now the destruction of Joyeuse with his army, that officer having owed his appointment solely to the personal favour of the king, raised the credit of Guise himself, who also soon afterwards enabled them to compare it with an exploit of his own; falling on an army which was sent, under Count Dohna, to the assistance of the Huguenots by the Protestant princes

of Germany, and twice routing them with prodigious slaughter. It may be doubted whether their defeat was any real injury to Henry of Navarre. It is never advantageous to a prince to triumph over those who are, or who are to be, his own subjects, by foreign aid. But to Henry of France it was a severe blow. For the German army had amounted to 40,000 men, a force against which he had flattered himself that Guise could not possibly make head; and now that that hope had failed him, he seemed to have no resource left. It was in vain that he sought the interposition of the Queen of England,* who at that time was sufficiently occupied with her own preparations for meeting the Spanish invasion and the Invincible Armada. He returned to Paris, and there waited in helpless hopelessness to see what would be the next steps taken by the triumphant Guise. He had not long to wait. Guise had a sister, the Duchesse de Montpensier, a woman of great talent, and still greater wickedness. Before her brother could reach Paris, she busied herself incessantly in exciting the feeling of the citizens against the king, ridiculing not only his more scandalous vices, but the strange fits of devotion which he occasionally displayed when he would for a day or two enrol himself in the number of the Penitents, Flagellants, or some other sect of crazy fanatics, and make one in a procession to walk with bare feet, and shoulders bleeding from the lash, through the streets. She would hold up her scissors and say that she had had them sharpened to give him the tonsure when, as would soon be the case, he exchanged the throne for the cloister. And it also

* Letter of Strafford to Elizabeth. "Hardwicke State Papers," vol. i. p. 251, quoted by Wraxall, but apparently unknown to Sismondi.

happened that, in the spring of 1588, the king was unexpectedly deprived of one who, in spite of existing differences, might have been confidently reckoned on as one of the natural supports of the Crown against any attack of an ambitious subject, by the death of Condé, who was poisoned in the spring of this year, not without the circumstances of his death giving rise to strong suspicions that the murderer had been his own wife, who desired thus to conceal a paltry intrigue which she was carrying on with an officer of her husband's household. It seems probable that, even as late as Condé's death, Guise had not yet entirely made up his mind to proceed to violent measures against his sovereign, but that his idea rather was, by gradually removing or driving from Court all his favourites and chief advisers, to gain from his weakness a tacit sanction to his own assumption of power, such as had been enjoyed by the Maires du Palais of old, the transition from which to his seizure of the actual sovereignty would prove as easy as it had proved in the time of Pepin. But in enterprises of this kind the original leader, however crafty and subtle he may be, is rarely able to regulate the pace of the movement by his own will or judgment; he is pushed on by those behind him. And so it happened in this instance. The populace of the capital was more impatient than Guise himself. In each of the sixteen quarters of the city the inhabitants established a council in the interests of the League. The president of each council was in regular communication with the Council of the League, and the collective body of presidents formed a separate Council of Sixteen, who, exciting their own passions by the exertions they made to rouse those of the citizens in

general, became furious with fanaticism, and, having persuaded themselves that the king nourished a secret design to suppress the Catholic religion, convinced themselves also that no means by which such a misfortune might be averted, could be unlawful. On computing their resources, they reckoned that they could at any moment collect 20,000 men capable of bearing arms; and they resolved to avail themselves of this strength in some way or other without delay. At one time they proposed to storm the Louvre, and massacre the guards, and so make themselves master of the king's person. At another, to surprise him in one of his daily excursions, or in the festivals with which Lent, which was approaching, was ushered in, when he usually traversed the streets in masquerade. Fortunately for Henry, Poulain, one of the Sixteen, disapproved of his companions' projects, and put him on his guard; but the sole resource which he could think of, beyond one day making a parade of conveying a number of cuirasses into the palace, was to send an officer to Guise to command, or rather to entreat him not to come to Paris. But at the same time the Sixteen addressed the duke to the contrary effect, begging him to hasten his approach; and he had no difficulty in deciding by whom it was most for his interest to be guided. Having first sent forward a number of his soldiers, and of his partisans of noble birth, on the 9th of May he entered Paris, received by the acclamations of a crowd which grew at every step till it blocked up the streets so as almost to prevent his progress, pressing round him to obtain a word or a smile, or even to kiss the hem of his garment,*

* "Chi gli baciava le folde de' vestimenti."—Davila, *lib.* ix.

while the women showered wreaths of flowers on him from the windows, and invoked blessings on his head as having saved them by his presence. He alighted at the palace of the queen-mother, and by her was conducted to the presence of Henry, who, having heard of his arrival, was deliberating whether he would have him assassinated instantly, such a course being especially urged on him by the Abbot del Bene, who, as a Christian minister, enforced his advice by the quotation, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But the Abbot was overruled, at least for the present; and Henry received his faithless subject with some degree of dignity, replying, when the duke alleged that he had come to Paris only to exculpate himself from the calumnious charges with which his enemies had poisoned the king's ear against him, that the best proof of his innocence would be given by the fact of his arrival being followed by no disturbance.

But Guise had now advanced too far on the path of rebellion to be able to draw back. He continued and extended his intrigues among all classes. In a subsequent interview with Henry, when he was no longer held in restraint by the presence of the royal guards, he even ventured to address reproachful and menacing language to his sovereign; and it soon became known to the king that he and the Council of Sixteen were meditating an open attack upon the palace. Henry, roused for a moment to something of his old military spirit by the imminence of the danger, brought into Paris a body of 6000 troops, chiefly Swiss, who were lying in the surrounding villages, and placed them under the command of Marshal Biron, on whose personal attachment he

could rely. But he was now incapable of long maintaining a resolute line of conduct; and the troops were no sooner established in the city than he, as it were, disarmed them by a command to remain wholly on the defensive. The hesitation which he thus showed emboldened the populace, whom, at the same time, the presence of the troops exasperated; and they at once broke out into open insurrection. They made themselves masters of important posts in different quarters of the city; and, when Biron began to move his troops forward to dispossess them, he found the streets in every direction blocked up with stout chains drawn across them, barricades of timber, casks of earth, and heavy materials of every kind, that rendered all advance impossible. It was the first instance of the employment of a species of street fortification, which more than one band of desperate men has since used in the same city with irresistible effect. The victory of the insurgents was complete, so complete that they disdained to ill-treat the king's guards after they had subdued them, with the exception of the Swiss (an exception also fatally repeated two centuries afterwards), of whom many were massacred, and the rest were seized, stripped of their arms, and thrown into prison. With a mental weakness which would be doubly shameful, were it not in some degree excused by his real want of means for any effectual resistance, the king once more sent his mother to treat with his rebellious subject. But, now that he had wholly thrown off the mask, Guise became so insolent and exorbitant in his demands that even Henry, fallen as he was, could not bring himself to yield to them. Distrusting, however, his safety if he remained in Paris, he resolved to leave it.

Sending Catharine to occupy Guise's attention in a conference,* he rode out of the city, and took the road to Chartres; not too soon, for 15,000 men were preparing to storm the Louvre; nor entirely unperceived, for, as he passed along under the Tower of Nesle, some of Guise's soldiers, who were quartered there, fired upon him. However, he reached Chartres in safety; and Guise, without further opposition, now made himself master of the whole city, and of all the departments of Government which depended on anything but the actual presence of the monarch.

Guise's first emotion when he heard of Henry's flight was one of fear. "Madame," said he to Catharine, "you have assassinated me." And, indeed, all who wished him well blamed him, for having by irresolution at the last moment thrown away the advantages which his previous audacity had placed in his power. The Great Duke of Parma said that "he had brandished his sword too much, and used it too little;" and Pope Sextus, who, when he heard of his having placed himself in the king's power by coming to Paris, had blamed his rashness, now, when the news that he had allowed the king to slip through his fingers reached Rome, was even more plainspoken in condemning his infirmity of purpose. The Sixteen, on the other hand, were decided enough in their conduct. Having first displayed their attachment to religion in general by a blasphemous procession, parodying all the most affecting circumstances of our Saviour's passion, they gave a further proof of their

* Davila, lib. ix., from whom I have taken most of these particulars. The circumstance that some of Guise's troopers fired on Henry is not mentioned by him nor by D'Anquetil; but is quoted by Wraxall from the "Chronologie Novenaire."

devotion to their particular form of Christianity by burning several Calvinists as heretics; and, after this open assumption of supreme power, they sent a deputation to the king, justifying their conduct on the day of the Barricades, and, amid several other insults to the royal authority, demanding the convocation of the States General. Henry consented, issued summonses for the States to meet at Blois at the end of the summer, and in the meantime published an Edict of Union, as it was called, by which he bound himself to use his utmost efforts to extirpate all heresy, and to make no terms or truce with heretics; enjoining his subjects, after his death, to own allegiance to no prince who should favour such; in fact, declaring his sanction to all the most extreme projects that had ever been entertained by the League. At the same time he appointed Guise Lieutenant-General of the kingdom; and then, as if on purpose to show his complete incapacity to appreciate the gravity of his situation, in other words, his complete unfitness for government, he crossed the country to Rouen,* where he amused himself with diversions and spectacles of different kinds, and water parties, just as if, says D'Anquetil, all his kingdom were not on fire.

Meanwhile, Guise occupied himself in managing the elections of the Deputies to be sent to the States General, exerting himself as far as possible to pack the assembly with his own creatures. In the middle of September it met at Blois, where, after a few weeks of preliminary arrangements, the king opened their sittings with an address apologetic and almost humble

* D'Anquetil, liv. vi.

in its tone; and his voluntary self-abasement, as was natural, only increased the insolence of his enemies. Guise even compelled him to withdraw from the published copy of his speech the few expressions which seemed to censure, however mildly, the disloyalty of his own conduct, and to swear to the observance of the Edict of Union; and the States were preparing to declare Henry of Navarre guilty of high treason, and, as such, incapable of succeeding to the throne, and also to present an address begging the king to appoint Guise Constable of the kingdom, a dignity which would have invested him with almost independent power, when Henry, driven to utter despair, and seeing plainly that the next step might be his own formal deposition, bethought himself of the design which a few months before he had laid aside. He summoned Guise to an audience, and stationed a body of guards in the ante-room of his closet, who, as soon as the duke entered, fell upon him with their daggers, and slew him. Another troop was sent to arrest his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who was put to death the next day. A third division entered the chamber of the Tiers Etat, seized the president and three more of the most obnoxious members, who were at once thrown into prison; and Henry, in his untimely exultation, went himself and announced to Catharine, who had had no idea of what was in contemplation, that having put to death the King of Paris, he was now King of France. But, as his mother warned him, an act of such violence required to be backed up by others of a similar character, and of any sustained resolution Henry was now quite incapable.

A few days later he lost her; and in her he lost the one councillor on whose attachment he could at

all times rely. She had been for some time ill with the gout; and the exertions which she now made to rouse her son to the energy which his affairs required, and the agitation consequent on those exertions, inflamed her disease. On the 5th of January, 1589, she died; and Henry was now forced to thread his way by himself through the labyrinth of perplexities which surrounded him, and which he soon found to have been but little cleared away by the removal of the chief conspirator. The States General, indeed, gave him no trouble. In the next century the attempt to arrest some members of the English Parliament proved the ruin of the monarch who thus violated the privileges of his subjects. But the French Council of the Nation now submitted to a similar act without a single murmur or remonstrance, and deserved to be dissolved, as three weeks afterwards it was dissolved, with silent contempt.

But though the States were not prepared to vindicate their own honour, Guise had left a brother, the Duke de Mayenne, who was well disposed to avenge him, having indeed a hope that he himself might succeed to the position left vacant by his death, and obtain the throne which Guise had thought, and at one time had certainly had within his grasp. Henry had had the foresight, when he determined to put his brothers to death, to send some officers also to Lyons, where Mayenne was at the time, to seize him; but he received timely warning of his danger, escaped to Burgundy, of which province he was governor, and began to raise troops for his own defence. Like Guise, he also was a man of considerable, and especially of military, talent, and, as soon as he felt himself sufficiently strong, he hastened to Paris, with a force

which increased as he advanced, till at last it amounted to nearly five thousand men. With them he entered the city, in the middle of February, and assumed his late brother's place as Chief of the League, and in that character began to organize operations against the king. An assembly of the chief citizens established a new Council of the Union. The council took upon itself to appoint him to succeed his brother, as Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, and he prepared for war with great energy. The feeble Henry tried to treat with him, but Mayenne was too conscious of his own power. With equal ill-success Henry endeavoured to appease the Pope, who was preparing to excommunicate him for the offence of putting a cardinal to death; and, having failed in both negotiations, he had recourse to the only hope left him, and addressed himself to his cousin of Navarre. That prince himself was not wholly free from embarrassments; for the Huguenot party was full of divisions, and, if we may believe Sully, M. de Turenne, who, as we have already seen, had a private grudge against him, was acting towards him much as Guise had behaved towards Henry III., and, anticipating the dismemberment of the kingdom, was labouring to secure himself a share in the distribution. But it was clear, even to a prince of less acuteness than the King of Navarre, that he was as interested as the King of France in quelling the pretensions of the League; and, in answer to the invitation he received, he sent Duplessis Mornay to promise the king the support of all his forces, on condition of having one stronghold on the Loire put into his hands to secure his retreat should such a measure become necessary. Saumur was given up to him, and he advanced to Tours to meet

the king and concert measures with him; yet he had reason to believe that at that very moment his cousin was trying to negotiate with Mayenne, and was prepared to sacrifice him to appease his rebellious subject. Fortunately, Mayenne was inaccessible even to so great a temptation. He flattered himself that he could crush the king without making any conditions, and endeavoured to surprise him at Tours while the more vigorous King of Navarre was absent, having gone to the southward to levy troops. His enterprise, however, was baffled, and after a time the news of the union of the two kings caused numbers of the most powerful nobles to flock to their standard. Small divisions of the royal army gained decisive advantages over one or two commanders of the League; and at last Mayenne, beginning to fear for the steadiness of the capital itself, repaired to Paris to assure his adherents there. The two kings pursued him, taking several towns on their way, and, as Henry III. had the sole authority in such matters, using great severity to any governors or garrisons who did not surrender them at the first summons. At last they reached St. Cloud, and found their army, which had been daily swollen by fresh reinforcements from all parts, to consist of not less than 42,000 men, a force sufficient for the siege of Paris itself.

On the other hand, Mayenne's army had been diminishing as that of the king had been growing, it now scarcely exceeded 8000 men, and the duke judged that that small number was likely to be rapidly lessened. It was necessary to try some other mode than that of an appeal to arms to defend the city, against which, as the "heart of the League," it was understood that the king was breathing a vengeance

which his former conduct showed he was not likely to be slow in executing. It was also reported that the royalist army had fixed on the 2nd of August for the storm of the city. All were in despair but the Duchess of Montpensier and a convent of Dominican monks. The latter had among them a young brother, only 22 years of age, named Jacques Clement, whom fanaticism had persuaded that he should be doing an acceptable service to the Catholic Church and to God by destroying a king who was probably a heretic, who was certainly in alliance with heretics; and the duchess quickened his zeal by the promise of favours of which she is said even to have allowed him a foretaste. On the pretence of having important intelligence to communicate, on the morning of the 1st of August, he obtained access to the presence of the king, and, having presented him a letter, plunged a knife into his stomach while he was reading it. The wound was soon ascertained to be mortal. Dying with far more dignity than he had lived, Henry took leave of his officers and nobles, exhorting them to show dutiful allegiance to the King of Navarre, as his lawful successor, and beseeching that sovereign to return to the Catholic religion, as the sole step which could conciliate the affection of his subjects, and secure him a peaceful reign. On the morning of the 2nd he died, having lived not quite thirty-eight years, and having reigned a little more than fifteen.

CHAPTER II.

If we would estimate correctly the amount of bigotry and cruelty, and, therefore, of misery, from which Henry IV. delivered France, we have only to reflect for a moment on the conduct of his enemies on the death of his predecessor. The Pope made his assassination the subject of an elaborate eulogy in the Consistory,* comparing the wretched fanatic who perpetrated it, to Judith or Eleazar; and, with a blasphemy which can hardly be repeated with decency, placing his deed, for the benefit it conferred on the human race, on a footing of equality with the incarnation and resurrection of our Saviour. And those at Paris who believed in the Holy Father's infallibility, were not slow to follow his example. The Council of Sixteen, with similar impiety, blessed Clement's mother in the very words which the first believers applied to the Virgin Mary, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked," adding also a substantial pension to the inspired benediction. The preachers raised him to the rank of a holy martyr (at the moment of his crime he had been cut to pieces by the courtiers who surrounded the king); while the Duchess de Montpensier, having embraced the

* D'Anquetil, liv. vii. p. 94, vol. iii. For the conduct of the King of Navarre, see Sully, liv. iii.

messenger who brought her the intelligence, drove in frantic exultation to spread the joyful news, as she called it, through the streets of Paris, declaring that the only alloy to her happiness arose from the fact that the dying monarch had not known that it was she who had prompted his murder.

The King of Navarre had not been present when Henry expired. On first hearing of his wound, he had repaired to his chamber; and, as the wounded man spoke with calmness, and as at first the physician did not apprehend danger, after a short interview he left him, as he supposed, to rest, and returned to his own quarters at Meudon. But at night an express came to announce that the king was dying, and, taking Rosny with him, he hastened to St. Cloud. As he approached the castle, he learnt that he was too late, for that Henry was actually dead, and presently the Scotch Guards, and some of the chief nobles and officers of State, Marshal de Biron, M. de Bellegarde the Master of the Horse, and others who came forth to meet him, did him reverence as their king and master. But Henry, one of whose most useful qualities was a calm and clear judgment, was not deceived into a false estimate of his position by this first show of loyalty. He was aware that, while he had alienated many of the Huguenots, who seemed to be his natural supporters, by the advances which he had made to the Catholics, he had yet wholly failed to attach the Catholics themselves. And when, an hour or two afterwards, M. d'O, in the name of the nobility present with the Court, addressed him in a set speech, expressive of their united opinion that, if he wished to become King of France, he must begin by espousing the religion of the majority of the French

people, he can have said nothing which Henry was not really prepared to hear. It was to no purpose that he assumed a tone of injured surprise at the nobles thus seeking to take advantage of him at the first instant of his accession; or that a gallant soldier, M. Givri, declared him "the king of all brave men, whom none but a coward would desert." Henry knew that, even of those who were most forward and loudest in their expressions of loyalty, many were too fickle to be trusted, and that many were seeking chiefly their own interest, and hoping to make a market of his necessities. In truth, no sovereign in the history of modern Europe has ever ascended a throne amid greater difficulties. Had Henry III. lived but three days longer, they would have been greatly diminished; for Paris could not have resisted for a single day the assault which he was preparing to make on it, and the capture of the city must have crushed the League, by placing all its leaders in his power. But though, while he was alive, the chief command would really have been in his cousin's hands, and the soldiers would have obeyed him cheerfully, from confidence in his gallantry and energetic skill, the moment that the nominal authority also became his, that he assumed the command, not as the king's lieutenant, but as the king himself, other considerations began to operate. Men began to recollect all that they had heard about the remoteness of his relationship to the reigning family, and the consequent uncertainty of his title; they remembered that there were other claimants to the throne, his own uncle, the Cardinal Bourbon, a prince of the Church, being among them; and still more frequently did they recall to mind that he was a heretic of the worst kind, a relapsed heretic, and, as such, under the ban of the

Pope; that he discountenanced the religion which they professed, and cherished that which they detested. Many at once began to desert his standard, and he was well aware that of the 42,000 men who the day before had been ready to storm Paris under his command, a very small proportion could be relied on for adhering to him in his new and apparently improved position. He had, indeed, about 2000 Huguenots in the army, who had accompanied him when he joined the Court; the Swiss battalions, too, were nominally Protestants, but they were mercenary troops, caring for nothing but their pay, and he was wholly destitute of means to secure their fidelity by paying them. So poor, indeed, was he, that had he not appropriated his predecessor's wardrobe, he would have been unable to appear before his nobles in the state befitting his new dignity.

Questions of the most various kinds pressed upon him for instant decision. He had to assure those who were really willing to be loyal, if they could reconcile their loyalty with their religious duty; to conciliate and secure those who, whatever professions they might make, whatever doubts they might suggest, had really no object in view but their own interest; to avoid giving offence to the Huguenot party, his personal followers and natural supporters, as being of his own religion; and also to resolve at once on the military movements necessary for his safety, if Mayenne should come out and attack him on finding his force so greatly diminished. Amid all these shoals and rocks he steered his way with unsurpassed prudence and judgment. On the evening of his accession he held an assembly of the nobles and chief leaders who had been in attendance on the late king, and to them

he spoke freely, explaining that, though he was not prepared at a moment's warning to renounce the religion which he professed, nor could they desire so precipitate a conversion, he was, nevertheless, willing to be instructed on the point; and with that view would without delay assemble a national Council. He promised, moreover, that in the meantime he would maintain the Catholic religion in its existing supremacy, and would grant no privileges to the Reformers beyond those which they already enjoyed. These promises he further published in a formal declaration, which he signed and swore to on the morning of the 4th; and, in return, the greater part of the nobles present signed a declaration of loyalty and fidelity to him. There can be no question that at this moment he had fully made up his mind to return to Catholicism as soon as a decent interval of time had elapsed to give his conversion the appearance of proceeding from conviction. Even the Huguenot leaders perceived that he had no alternative, if he would preserve his throne,* while a large party among the Catholics looked on his speech and declaration as a practical assurance that he would in time comply with their wishes on this point. He had equal success in dealing with those whose motives were more worldly. The Baron de Sancy, who commanded the Swiss, with the aid of Biron, persuaded those troops to take service with him, at all events till they should receive orders to the contrary from their native cantons.

* "Il Signore della Nua (La Noue) huomo di esatta esperienza delle cose mondane, quantunque fosse ugonotto, disse liberamente al Re, che non pensasse mai di essere re di Francia, se non si facesse Catolico, che procurasse di farlo con sua reputazione, e senza danno di quelli che lungamente l' avevano servito."—Davila, lib. x. p. 59.

But Henry presently discovered that Biron not only conceived that such a service deserved a recompense, but that he had fixed in his own mind what that recompense should be, a grant of the rich Countship of Perigord,* which he insisted on Sancy's applying for to the king. Henry was perplexed. To refuse the demand might alienate the Marshal, with whose aid he could not afford to dispense; to grant it would be to encourage similar requests from other quarters, and so to impoverish, it might almost be said to dismember, the kingdom. He resolved to refuse; but with such address and conciliatory courtesy did he temper his refusal, and with such cogent arguments did he demonstrate its necessity, that Biron himself acquiesced in it, and volunteered to uphold him in all similar cases, in which, indeed, as they arose, refusal would be rendered easier by this example.

To decide on his own movements was a matter of even more pressing necessity. Within a week of his accession above 20,000 men had quitted his standards, and, though the leaders, such as the Duke d'Epernon, and others, in general adopted a neutral policy, and retired to their estates or governments in the provinces, the common soldiers for the most part repaired to Paris, and took service with the League. It was indispensable, therefore, for him to retreat, and his first idea was to make Tours his head-quarters, as that city had been for some time the chief stronghold of the royalists, and it was in the provinces beyond the Loire that he had the best prospect of recruiting his army. But it was urged upon him that a retreat

* Perefixe, i. 122.

which should place so large a river between himself and the capital would have too much the appearance of proceeding from a despair of eventual success, and, as such, would discourage his adherents and give strength to his enemies;* and, yielding to this argument, he broke up what remained of his army into three divisions, with one of which he entrusted the Duke de Longueville, to defend Picardy against the Spaniards; another, under Marshal d'Aumont, was to occupy Champagne; and he himself at the head of the third, which hardly amounted to 7000 men, fell back into Normandy, the people of which province he believed to be still well-affected towards himself personally, though their attachment to the Reformed religion had been greatly weakened in the course of the last two reigns. He had not been long on the march when he heard that Mayenne had quitted Paris and was pursuing him. Almost his first act after his accession had been to propose terms of accommodation to the duke, which, if that prince had followed the dictates of his own mind, he would very likely have accepted; for he was a man of moderate views, and, though endowed with considerable talents, wholly unfitted by his want of energy and personal activity for the post of leader of an insurrection. But he was under the guidance of others. His mother and sister-in-law, the widow of the murdered Guise, insisted on his exacting vengeance for the blood of his brother, for whose death they professed to look on Henry as having made himself responsible, by the alliance which he had subsequently concluded with his murderer. His sister, the Duchess

* D'Anquetil, liv. vii.

de Montpensier, urged the same argument with greater rancour, and advised him to claim the throne for himself; while the Sixteen and the whole body of the League entreated him not to abandon them to the mercy of a heretical king. The Spanish Ambassador, too, on the part of Philip, offered him unlimited assistance, both in men and money; and, driven by these arguments and entreaties, Mayenne, while professing the highest esteem for Henry's character, rejected his overtures, and caused the Cardinal de Bourbon to be proclaimed king, under the title of Charles X., contenting himself with the rank of Lieutenant-General of the kingdom; for the king whom he thus set up was a prisoner in Henry's hands, and the natural effect of this putting forward of his pretensions was to compel Henry to increase the rigour of his confinement lest he should escape.

Henry had an additional reason for keeping his hold upon Normandy, since one of his first steps had been to solicit support from Elizabeth of England, and she had at once forwarded him a sum of money, which, though only a few thousand pounds, was, as he declared, more than he had ever seen before in his life, and had promised him an early reinforcement of men, for whose reception it was necessary that he should keep the Norman ports open. With this view, at the end of August, he moved towards Dieppe, and entrenched a camp at Arques, a village three miles from that town; where a river, a marsh, and some steep hills contributed to form a position which he felt confident he could maintain against very superior numbers. He had good need to avail himself of every advantage of this sort; for when, in the last days of August, Mayenne quitted Paris in

pursuit of him, he was at the head of above 30,000 men, of whom nearly 5000 were well-appointed cavalry, a force more than four times as numerous as the king's, and which seemed to justify the duke in the boast which he permitted himself, that he was going to catch the Béarnais, a designation by which, during his mother's lifetime, Henry had been very commonly known, as Prince of Béarn. It was soon seen, however, that no difference in the armies could equal the difference between the commanders. Except, perhaps, in this single instance of his selection of his position at Arques, Henry never displayed any great military skill; but he was in the highest degree energetic and rapid in his movements, and in war such rapidity is often equal in effect to genius. Mayenne, on the other hand, was the slowest of mortals, slow in deliberation, slower in execution. Very fat, with an enormous appetite, and greatly addicted to sleep, he was singularly unfitted for military enterprise, especially in civil war, which requires more ceaseless vigilance and activity than any other. Though Arques is less than 100 miles from Paris, he was above a fortnight before he reached it; and Henry had so well profited by the leisure thus afforded him to fortify his camp, that for some days he repelled with ease every attack of his assailants. At last, on the 21st of September, a body of German lanzknechts approached the trenches as deserters, and, as such, were admitted within the lines, when they immediately turned their arms against the royal troops, who, being completely surprised, were at first thrown into great disorder. Mayenne, as soon as he perceived that their scheme had taken effect, brought down the flower of his army to co-operate with them. Three

of Henry's standards were taken, Biron was struck down, and nothing but the most desperate valour on the part of the king himself saved his army from destruction. For a moment he thought all was over, and as he spurred his charger among the enemy's ranks, shouted a question, "whether there were not in all France fifty gentlemen with resolution enough to die with their king?" "Courage, sire," replied Chatillon, a nephew of the old admiral, "we will all die with you;" and the almost superhuman efforts of a small band whom he collected to make good his promise, began to turn the fortunes of the day. But the royalists were nearly overmatched. From the scantiness of their numbers, none in their army could rest for a single moment; while Mayenne could from time to time relieve his men with fresh relays. Rosny, who had performed prodigies of valour at the head of a small division, came in person to Henry to beg for a reinforcement. "My friend," said the king, "I have not a man to send you; but for all that we must not lose heart." And presently a fog, which for the first hour had enveloped the scene of action, cleared off, and enabled the little garrison which Henry had placed in the castle of Arques to use their heavy guns.* They were only four, but they were well directed and diligently served, and the slaughter which they made in the dense ranks of the enemy was so great that, after sustaining a few volleys, they retreated with precipitation. Three days afterwards Mayenne made one more attempt to perform his boast; and a skirmish ensued which is only remarkable as affording the first instance of the em-

* Sully, liv. iii.

ployment of horse artillery.* The idea of such a force was first suggested to Henry by Charles Briza, a Norman gentleman, who had learnt the art of war in the West Indies, and who subsequently became one of his most skilful officers; and though on this occasion the force so employed consisted of only two guns, it so perplexed Mayenne by the rapidity with which it was manœuvred, that he soon drew off his army, and the next day retreated towards the Flemish frontier to concert his future operations with the Spanish general, the great Duke of Parma.

On the morning of the 21st, Henry's advanced guard had made prisoner the Count de Belin, who, when he was brought before him, expressed his astonishment that with so small a force he could think of resisting the numerous army of Mayenne. "You do not reckon the whole of my force," said the king, "for you forget to include God, and the justice of my cause." And it was to these assistants that he now attributed his victory. Its importance could hardly be overrated, not indeed as having inflicted any great loss on his enemies, but as having so early shown to the whole world what must be the result of a contest between the king and the duke. Such, indeed, was the light in which it was very commonly regarded even by those most adverse to him; and the Pope only gave expression to the universal feeling when he said that Henry must always be victorious, "because he did not spend as much time in bed as Mayenne spent at table." The very day after the duke had withdrawn from Arques, 5000 English and Scotch troops landed at Dieppe under the command of Lord

* Sismondi, p. viii. c. 1.

Willoughby d'Eresby; other reinforcements, whom the news of Henry's prowess brought to join him, presently raised his army to above 20,000 men; and, with a force thus strengthened, he too quitted his camp, and suddenly appeared under the walls of Paris. The citizens of Paris had been for some weeks expecting to see him, but not at the head of a triumphant army. While Mayenne was threatening him at Arques, messengers from his army had carried to the capital repeated intelligence of great advantages which he had gained. The Duchess de Montpensier worked a number of standards which she then displayed from her windows as having been captured from the royalist army. It was announced that the duke was going to bring Henry bound and gagged to the Bastille, and crowds of eager spectators lined the windows in the streets through which the prisoner was to pass, to feast their eyes on his humiliation. They had sold the bear's skin a little too soon. Henry at once stormed the suburbs on all sides, but he was not strong enough to attack the city itself, though Rosny, with a small company, entered the gates, and had penetrated almost as far as the Pont Neuf, when he was recalled by the king's order. Had an officer whom Henry sent to destroy the bridge over the Oise, across which lay Mayenne's road to the city, performed his duty, the royal army might have gained still more decisive advantages; but he was so remiss in the performance of his task, that the duke, who for once, on hearing of the danger of the capital, had laid aside his usual dilatory habits and hastened to its defence, arrived while the bridge was still sound, and thus gained an unopposed entrance into the city. He contented himself, however, with this advantage.

Henry tried to provoke him to come forth to give him battle, but he showed no signs of an inclination to accept the challenge; and the king, now that such a movement could no longer be imputed to weakness, retired to Tours.

From that city he again sent proposals of peace to Mayenne, and some of the duke's councillors advised him to treat; but the spirit of Madame de Montpensier was still unconquered, and she prevailed with him to reject all terms of accommodation, though she was unable to carry the other point, which she urged with unabated vehemence, and to persuade him to declare himself king. To that honour there were aspirants enough without him. His uncle, the Duke of Lorraine, claimed the throne for his own son, as head of that family; Philip of Spain desired to abrogate the Salic law, and then to assert the rights of his own daughter, whose mother, Princess Elizabeth of France, had been the sister of the late king; the Duke of Savoy advanced similar pretensions in right of his mother, the sister of Henry II., while many of the nobles would willingly have seen the kingdom dismembered, hoping to establish their own authority in the separate provinces. Amid all these conflicting claims, the clergy and the lawyers sought to make their voices heard; the clergy, putting forward the College of the Sorbonne as their mouthpiece, published a string of propositions, which amounted to a denunciation of all pretensions but those of the Cardinal; while the lawyers and the Parliament of Paris, resting on his undoubted legal right, were firm in their support of Henry, provided he should become a Catholic. He, on his part, felt himself now strong enough to declare it an act of high treason to hold any commu-

nication with the League; and this show of confidence was not without its effect on the minds of the many who, to apply to them a name which a party in our country gave themselves half a century later, were waiters on Providence. During the winter, starting from Tours as his head-quarters, Henry made himself master of many important places in the surrounding districts, and his success began to make its due impression on foreign powers. The Venetians acknowledged him as King of France, and sent him an ambassador; and even the Pope enjoined his legate to be cautious of committing himself to any hostile measures against him.

Henry was continuing his progress, and at the end of February was besieging Honfleur, when Mayenne found it necessary to change his tactics and give him battle, confiding in his superiority of numbers to bring it to a favourable issue. With this intention, he laid siege to Meulan, a strongly fortified place in the neighbourhood of Paris, which Rosny had secured for Henry in the first days of his reign, in the expectation that the king would abandon his other enterprises in order to relieve it. He was right. On hearing of the danger of that place, so important from its vicinity to the capital, Henry at once raised the siege of Honfleur, and hastened to its succour. Mayenne retired at his approach, on which he too fell back, and threatened Dreux; Mayenne in his turn following him. On receiving intelligence of the duke's approach, Henry suspended his siege operations, and drew up his whole army for the conflict, for which he was equally anxious, in a plain on the banks of the Eure, and close to the village of Ivry, from which the battle which ensued has taken its

name. Not that his force was equal in numbers to that which he was preparing to encounter. Having been compelled to detach one or two divisions for other objects, he had not with him above 12,000 men, and, though he was joined a day or two before the battle by three or four of his most trusted officers, Duplessis Mornay, La Tremouille, and Rosny himself, who, on receiving notice from Henry that a battle was imminent, and that he had need of every man who could be brought to him, had hastened to take his share in it, with two companies of cavalry, his whole army reached little more than half the number of Mayenne's; for the duke had just received a reinforcement of Spanish troops under Count Egmont, the son of the gallant and ill-treated victor of Gravelines; and the force with which he was preparing to fall on Henry amounted to nearly 25,000 men. He would himself, perhaps, have willingly dispensed with the aid of the Spaniards, for, as an honest Frenchman, he dreaded the influence of Philip on his country far more than that of Henry; and Egmont, though brave, was a man of no military skill, and of a violent and unruly temper.

It was the afternoon of the 13th of March when the allies first came in sight of the king's army, which they had imagined to be retreating; and having, under this idea, passed on in no very careful order, Mayenne occupied the rest of the day in making his arrangements for the attack. The weather was bad: thick rain was falling, and his troops, though wearied with a long march over wet roads, had to pass the night in the open air, while the royal army was under cover in the villages of St. André and Turcanville, which protected their flanks when

the next morning they returned to their position. But the duke doubted not that his superiority in numbers would more than counterbalance such a trifling disadvantage; while Egmont declared that he and his Spaniards were alone sufficient to win the victory, and that, if Mayenne were not quicker than usual, they would finish the battle before he came up. The field of action was an open plain, presenting no natural advantages for either party, except that a slight rise in the ground in some degree protected the royalists from the enemy's guns, and this suited the inclination of the king, who trusted for success not so much to manœuvres, as to hard fighting, and the impetuous gallantry of his followers, especially of his cavalry, in whom, as being chiefly men of gentle birth, he placed more reliance than in any other part of his army. Neither commander made any provision for a retreat in case of defeat; Mayenne neglecting the precaution from over confidence, Henry because he was resolved not to survive one. "There was no retreat," he replied to an officer who spoke to him on the subject, "but the field of battle." And in the same spirit, in a short prayer which he offered up in front of his army, he besought God, if he saw fit to deprive him of victory and the kingdom, "to deprive him also of life, and to suffer him at least to die in the sight of the brave warriors who were about to expose themselves in his service." But, however he might humble himself before God, in his address to his followers he breathed nothing but high hope and manly confidence. "My friends," said he, "you are Frenchmen; I am your king; yonder is the enemy; the greater their numbers, the greater our honour. If you lose sight of your standard, follow my white

plume; you will see it constantly in the path of honour and duty." The battle was fought, exactly as Henry could have wished, chiefly by the cavalry; and Egmont's haughtiness and impatience ruined his side. Finding his men galled by the royal batteries, he would not wait for Mayenne, but with his own battalions, and a regiment of German horse, charged Givri's division with such impetuosity as to throw it into complete confusion. Passing through it, he came in front of the artillery, and, had he passed on at once, it might have gone hardly with the battery; but, as he came close up to the guns, he halted to show his disdain of the heretics, as he called them, by unseemly gestures of contempt, and so, by childish bravado, threw away the impulse which might have carried him on in triumph. His whole division was thrown into disorder by the suddenness of his halt; and, before it could recover, Givri, who had rallied his men, and who was gallantly supported by D'Aumont, and the young Baron de Biron with their divisions, fell upon him, and cut him and his men to pieces; he himself being among the first to fall: the German cavalry and the French lancers fared but little better, for the veteran Tavannes, who commanded in that part of Mayenne's line, being extremely short-sighted, had marshalled them so close together that they had not room to manœuvre. The two divisions threw one another into confusion, and before they could recover, Henry came down upon them in person with irresistible fury, and drove them and Mayenne himself, who was in their rear, off the field; their retreat uncovered the infantry, who finding themselves unsupported and isolated in the middle of the field, and attacked on all sides by the victorious

cavalry, made but little resistance; the Swiss, in a body, surrendering to Biron without striking a blow. Henry's chief officers had fought each as if the fortune of the day depended on his single arm; Rosny had his horse killed under him, but, though bleeding from five wounds, and with a bullet in his thigh, would not quit the field till a sabre-cut on the head laid him senseless on the ground; but conspicuous above all was the king himself, plunging everywhere into the thickest of the fight, and more than once selecting for single combat and slaying some trooper of unusual prowess in the hostile ranks. The Marshal Biron who remained in the rear, in command of the reserve, expostulated with him afterwards, saying that the share which he had taken in the fight belonged to himself as a subject, and that his own post would have been fitter for the king. And the rest of his officers implored him, as one on whose safety the welfare of all depended, not again to expose himself so recklessly. Nor did he cease from his exertions when the victory was secured; but then they had a different object, the protection of his defeated enemies from the fury of his own men. "Save the French," he cried, as he hurried along the field; "save the French, but show no mercy to the foreigners." And he had reason to be particularly bitter against the Germans, for they had been raised among his partisans in Germany, in Hesse, in Ulm, and Nuremberg, for his own service; but had been seduced on their march by the promises and bribes of the Duke de Lorraine to break faith, and enlist with the League.

Mayenne retreated, it might almost be said, fled towards Paris, Henry pursuing him in person nearly as far as Mantes, near which town he at last rested for

the night at the castle of Rosny. While he was supping there with his captains, one of them asked him what the battle was to be called. "The day of the Almighty," replied the king, humbled by the very grandeur of his triumph, "for to Him alone is the glory owing." In truth, it had been a great victory. Six thousand of the army of the League had fallen either in the battle* or the subsequent flight; for when the fugitives reached the bridge of Ivry, they found it broken, and many were drowned in the Eure; while, besides the Swiss, many were taken prisoners, and all the baggage, all the artillery, and above forty standards fell into the hands of the conquerors. No such victory had been gained on either side since the first outbreak of the civil wars; and, had Henry followed it up with as much vigour as he had displayed in gaining it, it might very possibly have led to an instant conclusion of the war. It might have been expected too, as it happened also that on the same day his army in Auvergne, under the Marquis de Curton, routed M. de Randau, the general of the League in that province, that this concurrence of happy events would have prompted him to avail himself to the utmost of his success.† But as, after Coutras,

* I have followed Davila in his statement of the numbers of Mayenne's army, and of his loss; but the accounts of both are very various. Perefixe, who puts his original army at only 16,000, says scarcely 4000 escaped.

† "En toute occasion Henri merita le même reproche: prompt et plein d'ardeur dans le combat, il ne sut jamais tirer parti de ses victoires:" Sism. viii. 1. Sully, however (iv. 1), while he admits that the consternation of the whole party of the League was so great that the king at first expected to derive great advantages from it, ascribes his subsequent inactivity to want of money to pay his army, especially the Swiss, who would not move a step till they received their arrears. He also imputes Henry's total want of the necessary funds to the deliberate malice of M. d'O, the Minister of Finances, "who secretly cherished a mortal hatred of the king."

he had thrown away the advantages which were then within his reach, so now he loitered for a fortnight at Mantes, thus giving the citizens of Paris time to recover from their consternation, and Mayenne leisure to adopt measures to continue the war, by rallying his troops, bringing up fresh reinforcements from the provinces, and above all, by securing the assistance of Philip and his invincible general the Duke of Parma. At last, at the end of the month, Henry moved forward, not as yet directly against Paris, but reducing the towns and villages around it, from which the citizens usually drew the greater part of their supplies. He even proceeded as far to the southward as Sens, hoping to surprise that important city; but finding it too much on its guard to be captured without a regular siege, he abandoned his design, turned back, and on the 8th of May arrived in front of the capital, and established a strict blockade. He was far too weak to hope to reduce it by any other means; for the whole force which he could employ against it did not greatly exceed 15,000 men: and the garrison consisted, besides 3000 regular troops, of not fewer than 50,000 militia, who could be well relied on behind walls, though they might not have proved as formidable in the open field. The very day after the commencement of the siege, the Cardinal de Bourbon died; thus relieving Henry of one nominal opponent, of some importance, since the League had selected him to bear the title of king, but not, of his own inclination, hostile to his nephew, of whom he always spoke as his sovereign. Perhaps the most striking proof of the importance of the victory of Ivry may be found in the fact that though, according to their own principles, the throne was rendered vacant by his

death, the heads of the League took no steps to fill it, nor did they ever set up any other competitor against Henry.

Though not strong enough to assault the walls of Paris, the royal army was sufficiently powerful to maintain the blockade strictly, and the Parisians soon began to experience the most dreadful privations. A great number of the citizens had quitted the city, or had sent away their wives and children during the period which had elapsed between the battle and the commencement of the siege; but 220,000 still remained, a population that was evidently too great to be sustained by any previously accumulated stores, and which therefore depended on daily supplies. And these were entirely cut off. All that the nobles and the rich could do for the starving multitude was liberally and cheerfully done. The priests melted down the church plate, the ladies sacrificed their jewels. Even the Papal legate and the Spanish ambassador devoted all the funds at their disposal to relieve the suffering which they saw around them; but in reality what was wanted was not money, but corn to be bought with the money. The most loathsome food was not only eaten, but diligently sought for, and purchased at a lavish price; yet many began to die of actual starvation, when suddenly relief came. Mayenne had gone to the Flemish frontier to confer with the Duke of Parma in person, and had urged upon him the fickleness of all his countrymen, and particularly of the Parisians, who were already raising the cry of "Bread or peace," and who, if compelled to surrender to Henry, were not unlikely to complete their submission by acknowledging his title to the throne; and that great general, though himself unconvinced,

and feeling that the suppression of the Flemish insurrection was of greater consequence to his own sovereign, yet on reporting Mayenne's argument to him, received such positive orders to comply with the duke's request, and to save Paris from the grasp of the Huguenot, that he had no choice but to prepare to obey; and, as he was not himself in a condition to move at once, he sent forward a division of between three and four thousand picked troops, promising to follow as soon as he could with a larger body. Mayenne made a skilful use of this reinforcement, occupying Henry's attention with some desultory skirmishes around Laon, while a strong detachment, having a train of provisions under its escort, passed unperceived behind the Marne, and reached the starving capital in safety. But Henry avenged himself for this mishap by the capture of St. Denis and of all the suburbs, and was thus enabled to draw the blockade closer. Of such privation and misery as now pressed down the unhappy Parisians, history has preserved few records. It was so terrible that the knowledge of it unmanned Henry himself, so that he voluntarily diminished his chance of success, and with a humanity of which there are still fewer examples in war, gave a safe conduct to some thousands of the more helpless of the citizens, and allowed them to pass through his lines to find food for themselves, and so to relieve their besieged companions from the task of supporting them. Yet, in spite of this act of kingly generosity, before the end of July it was affirmed that 30,000 persons had died of famine, and the survivors compelled Mayenne and his half-brother, the Duke de Nemours, whom he had made governor of the city, to profess a willingness to treat with the king. But

this profession was designed only to quiet the citizens. In reality, Mayenne was resolved to wait for the Duke of Parma, and at last, on the 23rd of August, that great commander, with 17,000 men and 20 guns, reached Meaux, where Mayenne, with nearly 13,000 more, was anxiously awaiting him; and the two dukes at once commenced active operations against Henry, by which Parma doubted not that he should compel him altogether to raise the siege. Henry's army had recently been so strongly reinforced that in numbers it nearly equalled that of the allies, though his new levies could not be considered a match for the renowned infantry whom Parma had brought to a perfection of discipline previously unknown. He drew them up, however, in order of battle, and, when he found that the duke did not attack him, sent him a formal challenge; but Parma replied that "he had not come so far to take advice from an enemy when to fight, but that, if Henry were the skilful general he supposed himself, he was at liberty to compel him to do so. He had no intention to put the success, of which he was otherwise secure, to the hazard of a battle."* In the spirit of this answer he entrenched his camp, and by occupying Henry's attention with repeated skirmishes, enabled small relays of provisions to make their way into the city; but he was, in reality, meditating a more important stroke. The small town of Lagny, on the Marne, was in the king's hands; and close behind it were large magazines of provisions belonging to the League, and waiting for an opportunity of being conveyed to Paris. The knowledge that food was so

* D'Anquetil, liv. vii.

near made the Parisians more impatient than ever; and they clamoured so loudly for a battle, that Parma at last promised to grant their wishes, and contrived to let it be generally known that he designed to attack the besiegers in their lines on the 9th of September. Henry joyfully prepared to receive him, and on the expected day drew out his army in line of battle. Parma spent the morning in manœuvring some battalions in front of him, without, however, allowing a single company to get into action; but, while Henry's attention was fully occupied with what he saw in front of him, one strong division of the allied army arrived round a hill in his rear, and before Henry, or M. Lafin, the governor of Lagny, were aware that the place was in danger, threw a bridge across the river, battered a breach in the walls, and made themselves masters of it, almost without resistance. The possession of Lagny gave the allies the command of the Marne, and enabled them to victual Paris at pleasure. Baffled and disappointed, Henry had now no alternative but to raise the siege. He made one attempt to surprise the city by escalade, but the garrison was too vigilant, and in the second week of September he fell back and broke up his army into different detachments, which he dispersed over the provinces, taking up his own head-quarters for the coming winter at Compiègne.

Henry had suffered in his reputation for military skill by the proof thus given of his inferiority to the Spanish general. But it cannot be said that the check which he had received was of a character to render his ultimate success less probable. If it was clear that, while Mayenne had the aid of Parma, he could baffle his utmost efforts, it was equally clear

that without such aid he was inferior to the king, and also that a long continuance of foreign assistance was neither possible nor desirable. However, the sense of Parma's superiority made Henry for a time change his plan of carrying on the war. He attempted no great enterprise; but, as he was forced to keep his army employed, in order to hold it together, and to extend his resources, and as he also looked forward to a resumption of the siege of Paris, he occupied himself during the greater part of the next year with completing the reduction of the surrounding districts. The armies of the League, regulating their motions by his, confined their operations to the same class of conquest; and in this kind of warfare both sides met with a chequered fortune, succeeding in some instances and failing in others; but, on the whole, the balance of advantage lay with the king, whose captures, Chartres and Noyon being included among them, were more important than those effected by the League. Indeed, his enemies did not this year give him as much trouble as his own adherents, among whom jealousies and divisions began to spread. Some honestly wished to see his power established as the surest means of restoring peace to the country; others, on the contrary, wished the war to last, as the state of things to which they owed their chief importance, and from which they expected the greatest advantages to themselves. Some, again, were sincerely anxious to see him acknowledged as king, but only on condition of his rejoining the Catholic Church, the welfare of which was their main object. But these formed a smaller party than the others, the smallest of all, except that which was really attached to Henry himself. Mayenne, too, was not without

his disquietudes of a similar kind. The Duke de Nemours was jealous and distrustful of him, and he of Nemours; while, taking advantage of his absence from Paris, and of the discontent of the citizens, who had not yet forgotten, or indeed ceased to feel, the miseries of the siege, the Sixteen arrogated to themselves an authority little less than supreme. They began to suspect that, if Henry were to rejoin the Catholic Church, as it was reported that he was about to do, the duke would be willing to acknowledge his authority, while peace so procured would undoubtedly bring with it toleration for the Huguenots, whom they detested the more because they were unable to subdue them. Such a peace, therefore, they denounced with implacable ferocity. They were seconded by the preachers, who daily addressed the most violent language and the most wicked counsels to their hearers, indulging in the foulest and most indecent ribaldry of invective both against Henry and all whom they suspected of being friendly to him, and openly urging their assassination. "The knife," they said, "was the only weapon." And to such a pitch did the Sixteen carry their violence, that, at last, not contented with sending a letter to Philip, in which they offered him the crown of France, they appointed a sub-committee of ten to "take all measures that might be necessary for the safety of their party,"* and actually seized, and without trial put to death M. Brisson, the President of the Parliament of Paris, and two other of the chief members of the

* The Committee of Safety, consisting also of ten members, was the foulest of all the bodies which, 200 years afterwards, deluged Paris in blood by the execution of innocent men. In so many respects, is this war of the League the type of the Revolution.

same body. This atrocity was fatal to themselves, since, on hearing what had taken place, Mayenne put himself at the head of a small body of troops, and hastening to Paris, hung the chief authors of these crimes in an equally summary manner. But, though for a moment he had restored confidence, and crushed a faction, he could not reflect without uneasiness on the danger in which the whole country was, when a body in the position of the Sixteen could invite the domination of a foreigner, and proceed to such outrages against their unoffending fellow-citizens. And Sismondi, in relating these events, looks upon them as having been the immediate cause of the ruin of the League, through the conviction that they forced on all honest or sober-minded men that no evils that could arise from the reign of even a heretic king, or the toleration of their Protestant fellow-countrymen, could equal those which were inseparable from a continuance of the war.

But, whatever weight considerations such as these may have had with either Mayenne or the Parisians, peace could not be got; and both the chiefs continued busily to strengthen themselves for a maintenance of the war, in which object, however, Henry was by far the most successful. His hardest task was to negotiate with Queen Elizabeth; who, though willing, and indeed desirous to assist him, wished at the same time to serve herself, and endeavoured to stipulate for the restoration of Calais as the price of her support. Henry, however, sent to England an able negotiator, the Viscount de Turenne, who showed her so plainly the impossibility of his making a concession which would for ever ruin him in the eyes of all men of patriotism or common sense among his subjects, that

she abandoned the unpalatable demand, and sent him a sum of money, and 7000 men, under the command of her favourite Essex. Turenne was equally successful in Germany and Holland. In the former country the Protestant princes and free towns supplied him with money, and allowed him to raise troops, till in the course of the summer he was able to lead a well-appointed army of 12,000 men to join his sovereign; and, in Holland, Prince Maurice undertook, in the event of Parma repeating his invasion of France, to make a diversion in Flanders which would soon compel him to abandon such an enterprise.*

Henry gave a proof that he felt himself stronger than formerly, when he ventured to issue an edict restoring to the Huguenots the privileges which had been guaranteed to them by the peace of Bergerac, but of which Guise had subsequently compelled Henry III. to deprive them. And when he was joined by all his foreign allies, he felt himself also in a position to advance towards Verdun, where Mayenne was then encamped, to offer him battle. Mayenne declined the challenge, and Henry crossed into Normandy, and in November formally invested Rouen with an army of 40,000 men.

Rouen was one of the most populous and wealthy cities of France; and as such it had been entrusted to a governor of tried valour and military ability, the Marquis de Villars, who had under his command above 6000 regular troops, and a very numerous and well-disciplined body of militia. It was, however, a place

* In reward for these services Henry arranged Turenne's marriage with the heiress of the duchies of Bouillon and Sedan, and created him Duke de Bouillon. He was the father of the great general of Louis XIV.—29. Sully, liv. iv.

of too great importance for Mayenne to be willing to trust its safety to its internal resources alone; and once more he solicited the aid of the Duke of Parma. The duke hastened to the scene of action with 30,000 men; and again the king had to bow before the pre-eminence of his skill both as a strategist and as a tactician. Leaving Biron to continue the siege, he himself, with the bulk of the cavalry, marched towards the frontier to meet Parma and harass him on his advance; but so imprudent were his movements that he had more than once a narrow escape of being made prisoner. Once he found himself within pistol-shot of the duke's advanced guard, and was only saved from being cut off by the speed of his horse. A day or two afterwards he was in still greater danger. Attended by a small escort he was watching the movements of the duke's army, and of the duke himself, who, being disabled by the gout, was carried about in a chair, and he did not perceive that a body of light cavalry had been detached to intercept him, and was already forming in his rear. A second time he had to flee with precipitation, not escaping without a slight wound in the side from a musket-ball, nor without the loss of the greater part of his guard, who, with desperate courage, faced about and charged their pursuers to gain time for him, struggling against overwhelming numbers till they were nearly all overpowered and slain. Had the duke employed a greater force against him, he must have been taken; but Parma, always cautious, suspected that his advance was a snare to draw him into some ambuscade, and excused himself afterwards for having let him slip through his fingers, on the ground that "he had supposed that he was contending with a general, and not

with a common trooper;" while Henry, on the other hand, when blamed by his friends for such rash exposure of himself, defended himself on the ground that though "prudence might become the Duke of Parma, since by it he lost nothing but an occasional advantage, which was not indispensable to him, he, who was fighting for his crown and for the re-establishment of peace, was right to run all risks, even that of his life."*

But even without the help of so invincible an ally, the governor was well able to defend the city by his own resources. Before the king could rejoin his Marshal, Villars chose a day when he knew that the trenches would be guarded by some of the weakest regiments, and, sallying forth at daybreak with 2000 men, he attacked the besiegers' works at several points at once, cut to pieces the troops on guard, carried off some guns and spiked others, set fire to their engines, destroyed their mines, and regained Rouen with very trifling loss. Before the royal army had recovered from their confusion, a body of Mayenne's troops passed through their lines, and conducted an abundant cargo of provisions into the city; and though, on rejoining the army, Henry instantly repaired his trenches and refurnished them with fresh cannon, he could not restore the confidence of his men, who despaired of any success while the Duke of Parma was in the field against them; and, in consequence, such numbers of his nobles and chief supporters retired to their homes, that by the beginning of April he found his army reduced to half its former number. Presently he learnt that Parma, who, con-

* D'Anquetil, liv. vii. p. 211.

fident in the safety of Rouen, had, at the request of his ally, turned aside to reduce one or two smaller towns of some importance for the general operations of the campaign, was returning to attack him; and on the news of his approach he raised the siege and retired to Pont de l'Arche.

The deliverance of Rouen being thus accomplished, the allies moved down the Seine against Caudebec, a small town on the northern bank, the possession of which would restore to the citizens of Rouen the command of the river. It had no power of making a long resistance; but its acquisition was dearly purchased by the conquerors. A musket-ball from the walls struck Parma on the elbow, passing down the arm to his hand; and the wound, which to a man in good health would have been trifling, caused him suffering so severe and so long as totally to destroy his constitution, and before the end of the year to terminate his life. Yet, even in this disabled state he once more showed his superiority in military skill to his royal antagonist. On hearing of his return to Rouen to attack Henry, the nobles who had withdrawn from the king's army hastened back to their posts, so that by the end of April, Henry again found himself at the head of nearly 30,000 men. With this force he, in his turn, marched to seek the allies. He found them encamped on a narrow angle of ground between the Seine and the sea, Parma himself being confined to his bed from the effects of his wound; and, perceiving that in so limited a space they would be compelled either to fight at the greatest possible disadvantage, or to surrender without striking a blow, he took up a position which completely hemmed them in. The danger of the situation, and the impossibility of even

remaining in it, since they were nearly destitute of provisions, and wholly cut off from the receipt of fresh supplies, roused Parma from his bed. His colleague, Mayenne, was in despair; but he, still fertile in resources, perceived at once that Henry had wholly omitted to guard the river, though the presence of a Dutch fleet, which the Prince of Orange had placed at his disposal, rendered such an operation easy. By the river, therefore, the duke resolved to escape. He desired Villars to prepare a number of large boats covered with planking, and built two redoubts, one on each side of the river, to protect the passage. In less than a week the boats were prepared and floated down to Caudebec with the ebb tide; they were instantly formed into a bridge, across which the whole army passed with such celerity to the southern bank of the Seine, that when at last the Baron de Biron perceived what was going forward, and hastened to the spot with his cavalry, he found none of the enemy within his reach but a few of the rear-guard; and when, at the king's summons, the Dutch fleet moved up to fire on the bridge, it had done its work, for the last soldier of the League had quitted it; and Parma's son, Ranuccio Farnese, who had commanded the rear-guard, was already setting it on fire to prevent the king's army from availing themselves of it for a pursuit.

After these events there was a lull in the war; indeed, it may be said that no other great exploit was performed on either side. Warriors began to give place to diplomatists. Some of the negotiations which were entered into produced no fruit; as when Mayenne professed a willingness to treat with Henry, but demanded such terms for the League and the chief Leaguers, and most especially for himself and his

own family, as, if Henry had consented to them, might have left him the title of king, but would have left him but little else. But those which Henry opened with the Pope were less barren of results. He felt that the time was come for him to give a new character to the war by embracing Catholicism; but it was a necessary preliminary to such a step to ascertain whether, on his taking it, the Pope would revoke the excommunication pronounced against him by his predecessor, which, while still in force, would prevent the French Catholics in general from acknowledging him as king. He was aware that he could rely on the good offices of the chief Italian princes, who saw great danger to the independence of their country, if the power of Spain were not balanced by that of France, a posture of affairs to which the establishment of Henry's authority seemed essential. At the same time Clement VIII., who had lately been raised to the Papal chair, felt that this very consideration was an obstacle to his meeting their wishes, since he dreaded to offend Philip, to whose influence he owed his election. Fortunately, one of the French prelates in Henry's interest suggested a still more serious danger. Renaud de Beaune, Archbishop of Bourges, hinted at the possibility that the difficulty might be surmounted if the French Church were to declare itself independent of Rome; when the admission of the repentant king into the number of the true believers would materially depend on himself as Primate of France. Clement could not reconcile himself to the possibility of opening the door to a fresh division in the Church, and though he would not as yet openly send a favourable answer to the king's proposals, he consented to give his ambassador a secret audience;

and Henry had no longer cause to feel uncertain or anxious as to the reception which the announcement of his conversion would meet at Rome.

The chiefs of the League and their partisans had no expectation that he was preparing to take such a step. On the contrary, they believed him more fixed than ever in his preference for Calvinism. And in this belief they now began to discuss with some earnestness the claims of the different Catholic pretenders to the throne, Philip still intriguing to procure the repeal of the Salic law and the consequent declaration of his daughter's right; and several of the other claimants secretly countenancing his views, in the hope entertained by each, that he might have the throne as the Infanta's husband. But Mayenne had by this time become more desirous than formerly of appropriating the royal dignity to himself, or procuring it for his son; and with this view, while he complied with a demand pressed upon him by Philip to convoke the States General for the election of a king, and in the beginning of 1593 opened the meetings of a body of Deputies who assumed that title, he at the same time countenanced such a variety of pretensions and propositions, that all immediate decision between them was rendered impracticable; and secretly prompted the Parliament to address a remonstrance to himself against any measure which could have the effect of transferring the crown to any foreign prince or princess. Henry, on the other hand, who could not admit the legality of an assembly which he had not convoked, thought it advisable to perplex their deliberations by giving them notice of the views which he entertained on the subject. Accordingly, he prompted the Catholic nobles who adhered to him to

publish a protest against the meeting as altogether informal and illegal, coupled with an invitation to the Catholics of the League to meet them at some neutral place in the neighbourhood of Paris to discuss measures for the restoration of peace. And he himself issued a declaration confirming the assertion of the nullity of this meeting of the States, and denouncing Mayenne himself as a rebel, and liable to the penalties of treason if he did not instantly return to his allegiance.

Meanwhile, not allowing his attention to be distracted from his real business by these idle discussions and reclamations, Henry proceeded rapidly with the measures which he had resolved, to give his return to the Catholic Church the appearance of proceeding from a conscientious conviction. He invited a select body of prelates and other divines, including two of the Parisian clergy, to meet him at Mantes in July, for the purpose of enlightening him on some points of the controversy between the two Churches, on which he professed himself not wholly satisfied. After a long conference and an elaborate argument from M. de Beaune, he declared his doubts wholly removed; on the 23rd of July, having signed a confession of faith, he received absolution from the Archbishop. Two days afterwards, in the royal Cathedral of St. Denis, he solemnly abjured the errors of the Reformation, and was formally admitted by the Archbishop into the Catholic Church. The same prelate received his confession and again gave him absolution; after which he presented himself at the celebration of mass, and was quite as good a Catholic as he had been in 1572, or as his predecessors on the throne had been for many generations.

CHAPTER III.

It is a circumstance that perhaps testifies as strongly as any in Henry's history to his general and enduring popularity, that, deeply as religion was concerned in it, there is yet no question which has been examined with greater candour than that of his final adoption of Catholicism. Bitter as were the dread and detestation of the Catholics which, while the recollection of St. Bartholomew's Day was fresh in their minds, were naturally felt by the Huguenots, very few of them blamed his act at the time, and, undoubtedly, the majority of their leaders cheerfully acquiesced in it: and there can be no doubt whatever that the Reformers in France gained by it, since it placed him in a position to secure them a toleration and indulgence which they enjoyed in perfect security for many years, and which they could not have obtained from any prince already a Catholic for a single moment. So, also, to the kingdom at large it brought peace and prosperity. And, if the religion of each individual were to be determined by general policy instead of by his own conscience, there could be no uncertainty about the weight to which these considerations would be entitled. But it cannot be denied that a conversion by which the convert gains a throne, wears the appearance of having been dictated by immediate personal interest,

rather than by regard for the remote welfare of his co-religionists, or his countrymen at large. And therefore, to estimate Henry's conduct fairly, we must remember that, his earliest childhood having been passed at Paris under the protection of Catharine de Medici, the first education he had received had been that of a Catholic; and though, when he returned to his mother's care at Pau, that princess had laboured diligently, and, as she supposed, successfully, to eradicate the errors of popery from his heart, yet the events of his youth and early manhood had not been calculated to impress him with an idea that the differences between the two sects were of vital importance. Some of the doctrines of the Catholics, in which the difference between them and the Protestants is most irreconcilable, such, for instance, as that of transubstantiation, he declared that he had always preferred; there were comparatively minor points, such as the propriety of auricular confession, and the invocation of saints, by which he was most perplexed; and the question, as it presented itself to his mind, was, not which form of religion was logically the best founded, or the most consistent with Scripture, but whether there was in Catholicism anything incompatible with his salvation. And in this point of view he said that it had manifestly the advantage over Protestantism, for, while the Catholics denied the possibility of a Protestant being saved, the Protestants maintained no such opinion with respect to the Catholics.* Sully even affirms that the Protestant divines, who on one or two occasions were summoned to discuss their doctrines with Catholic disputants in Henry's presence,

* Perefixe, i. 220.

from a conviction that the king had previously made up his mind, and, moreover, that his abandonment of their own creed was necessary for the welfare of the State, and even of the two religions, purposely abstained from bringing forward their strongest arguments, and allowed the victory in the debate to rest with their opponents.* However this may have been, it is clear that after they admitted, what they could not deny, the possibility of the salvation of a Catholic, no argument founded on the superior purity of one form of belief over the other would have been of much weight with Henry, whose first object, as he told one of the least complaisant of the Protestant ministers, was "to give peace to his subjects and rest to his own soul." That, as a king, and one still forced to fight for his crown, he should have given a preponderating weight to considerations of State policy is hardly to be wondered at, nor will even those of deeper feelings of religion and purer lives, refuse on

* "Enfin, tout le monde, jusqu'aux Protestans, je dis plus, jusqu'aux ministres mêmes reformés employés dans les conferences, vinrent enfin à être fortement persuadés que le changement de religion du Roi était une chose absolument necessaire pour le bien de l'Etat, pour la paix, enfin pour l'utilité même des deux religions. Dans cette disposition il se fit une espèce de conspiration générale dans les esprits pour y amener. Les ministres reformés ou ne se defendaient plus, ou se defendaient si faiblement que l'avantage demeurait toujours du côté de leurs adversaires. . . . . Quelquesuns des ministres reformés qui approchaient le plus de la personne du roi, et qu'il consultait sur ses difficultés, trahirent formellement leur croyance, ou flattérent par un embarras concerté la religion qu'on regardait déjà comme celle du prince" (Sully, liv. v.). It must be added, especially as the feeling avowed is the key to many subsequent transactions, that the Reformers still retained the greater share of his personal confidence. He told Sully: "Quoique je sois Catholique, voire aye été assez eclairci pour croire que je puisse faire mon salut en cette religion-là, si ne vous célerai je point, qu'en ce qui conserve ma personne ou les affaires contre la ligue et les Espagnols, je m'assure davantage en ceux de la religion."—Ec. R. ii. 21, quoted by Sismondi.

this point to make allowance for the difficulties of his situation, and the apparent certainty that out of those difficulties there was no other conceivable mode of extrication.

Not only to himself, but to the great majority of his countrymen, his conversion and the restoration of peace seemed inseparable as cause and effect. And accordingly, the first step which he took after his re-admission into the Catholic Church by the Archbishop, was to renew to Mayenne the proposal for a truce, with a view to the conclusion of a general peace, which the Archbishop of Bourges had made in his behalf two months before, being even then authorized by Henry to profess his willingness to make his immediate conversion an indispensable preliminary to any treaty which might be agreed to. The duke, whose situation was now become more embarrassing than his, was in no condition to refuse the offer, so long as by the terms of the truce he did not commit himself beyond recall to an acknowledgment of Henry's title. Henry, feeling now quite assured of the reality, was indifferent about forms of expression, and consented that himself and Mayenne should be described merely as the chiefs of the two parties. And in this form an armistice was signed for three months, which was afterwards prolonged till the commencement of the ensuing year, and which Mayenne would gladly have extended still further, had Henry thought it for his interest to do so. It was received with universal joy, which was nowhere so great as in Paris itself, since on no other part of the kingdom had the miseries of the war fallen with more crushing severity. Henry himself remained at St. Denis, but his officers paid frequent visits to the capital, where they were received

with cheers by the populace, who also, with natural curiosity, flocked in crowds to St. Denis to see the king, whose humanity, exercised towards themselves, had made as deep an impression on their minds as his deeds in war, and whose gay, frank affability was admirably calculated to strengthen the favour with which they were inclined to regard him.*

Now that he had given formal proof of his conversion, it was evidently time to open a negotiation with Clement for the removal of his excommunication; but this the Pope, as if his purpose had been to show how little that sentence had been really caused by Henry's profession of Protestantism, was not yet ready to grant. It was to no purpose that Henry sent both a public ambassador, the Duke de Nevers, and a private agent, M. de Clielle, the steward of his household, to Rome; or that he secured the good offices of persons of high consideration in the Papal Court, such as M. d'Ossat, who not long afterwards arrived at the dignity of cardinal; and M. Olivier, Auditor of the Rota, who expostulated with the Pope freely on his evasive conduct towards the king, declaring that "if the devil himself were to wish to be received into the church, it would be the duty of his Holiness to admit him." Clement still refused to receive the ambassador as such, though he had admitted La Clielle to a private audience, and allowed him to leave a letter from Henry on his table; and though he also permitted Nevers to appear at his court as a noble of France, and in that capacity conversed with him on the affairs of his country. Nor was it, we may suppose, without his privity that Cardinal Tolet, of the order of the Jesuits,

* D'Anquetil, liv. viii. p. 281.

sent a message enjoining La Clielle to tell his master "that he had only to persevere steadily in his adherence to the Catholic faith, as the object of the Pope's apparent coldness was only to test his sincerity."*

It was of more pressing consequence to Henry to strengthen his party in the country against the renewal of the war, which he presently found to be unavoidable, when some despatches which his officers intercepted proved that Mayenne, in the willingness which he expressed to terminate the war, was wholly insincere, and that he was in secret as diligent as ever in promoting the League, and professed himself still resolute never to become reconciled to the king, however steady a Catholic he might be. From other sources Henry also learnt that the duke was connecting himself more closely than before with Philip; and he could hardly entirely acquit him of complicity in an attempt to assassinate him, which had been detected in the very first month of the truce, a man named Barrière, who had certainly been previously in the employment of his nephew, the Duke de Guise, having undertaken to stab him. For these reasons Henry resolved, as has been said before, to refuse any extension of the armistice beyond the commencement of the new year, and, as a preparation for the renewal of the war, in the middle of December he issued a proclamation describing the efforts he had made for peace, declaring all who should adhere any longer to the League guilty of treason; but offering an amnesty to all who should acknowledge his authority, with the sole exception of any one who had been

* D'Anquetil, liv. viii.

an accomplice in the murder of the late king. The wisdom of his recent conduct was soon established by the effect of this proclamation. When Henry III. was murdered, the Baron de Vitry, Governor of Dourdan, had at once gone over to the League, alleging that his conscience forbade him to serve a heretic king. But that pretext was now removed, and the baron, who had since been appointed Governor of Meaux, at once replied to the invitation contained in Henry's proclamation, by declaring his resolution to join him, and urging the citizens and garrison of Meaux to follow his example. They did so, sending a deputation to St. Denis to make their submission. The king gave the members a most gracious reception, promised them the continuance of their ancient privileges, and a diminution of their taxes, and, what was even more welcome, security against the introduction of the reformed worship into their town. His adherents took care that his treatment of Meaux should be widely known abroad, and it produced abundant fruit. Vitry's uncle, M. la Châtre, was governor of Orleans and Bourges; he imitated the example of his nephew, and the towns copied the conduct of Meaux. The important district of Provence mutinied against the Duke d'Epernon, its governor, and declared their allegiance to the king. Town after town, in every province in the kingdom, did the same thing; and Henry was determined to fortify his authority with the additional sanction of a coronation. One difficulty interposed, since Rheims, the usual scene of that solemnity, was in the hands of the League, and in that city was preserved the sacred ampulla, which, filled with holy oil, had come down from heaven for the coronation of

Clovis. But a search for precedents established the fact that Rheims had no exclusive right to that august ceremony: kings of France had been crowned at Mayence, at Orleans, and at other cities, and at the convent of Marmoutiers in Touraine was an ampulla not unlike that of Rheims in its history, and in the sacred balsam which it contained, which had been sent by God himself to his servant St. Martin, when that holy man had sprained his leg by a fall. There were many claimants for the honour, from which Henry selected Chartres, an episcopal city; and there, on the 27th of February, the Bishop Nicholas de Thou placed the crown on his head, and administered to him the oath which had been taken by his predecessors, with an additional clause, devised to meet the altered circumstances of the kingdom and of Europe, and which bound him to discountenance to the utmost and to expel from his dominions the favourers of any doctrine which the Church might pronounce to be heresy.

The ceremony was somewhat shorn of its customary magnificence by the non-attendance of a great portion of the nobles and prelates of the realm, most of the latter still adhering firmly to the League, while, of the lay nobles, many who were so far friendly to Henry as to avoid acting against him, feared as yet openly to commit themselves to his side. But among the witnesses who were present was one whose attachment he preferred to that of prelate or peer, yet whose appearance in a prominent position, if, in an age of such strange license, it gave surprise to none, yet caused great uneasiness to the few sincere and honest friends who had a genuine regard for their sovereign's real dignity. His sister, Madame Catha-

rine, the Princess de Condé, and other ladies, who were reckoned of the blood royal, sat in a gorgeous gallery in front of the altar; and among them was placed, by the king's express command, Madame de Liancour, or, to use her maiden name, by which she is still best known, Gabrielle d'Estrées, in her avowed character of the king's mistress. There had been ladies in a similar position in former reigns, whose names had been sufficiently notorious in their day, but, however busy and intriguing they had been, their attention had generally been directed rather to the accumulation of enormous fortunes for themselves, than to affairs of State; and history may commonly pass them over without mention. But Henry allowed his mistresses such a degree of political influence, and his evil example in this respect was so extensively followed in subsequent reigns, that such silence is no longer possible; nor, indeed, can an adequate idea of Henry's own character be given without some account of Gabrielle, and of the transactions through which she was placed in this position. We have seen how he threw away the advantages which he might have reaped from his victory at Coutras to gratify his infatuation for Madame de Guiche. That lady's empire over him was subsequently weakened by his passion for Madame de Beauvilliers, the Abbess of Montmartre, whom, during the siege of Paris, he persuaded to quit her convent to embellish his court; but her charms had not long captivated him when they were thrown into the shade by a report which reached him of the superior attractions of the youngest daughter of the Marquis de Cœuvres. He saw her, and perceived that rumour had only done her justice; and, though she was betrothed to one of

the most distinguished and faithful of his adherents, the Duke de Bellegarde, he resolved to appropriate her to himself. But at first his suit was repelled; Gabrielle was really attached to Bellegarde, and preferred the prospect of becoming his duchess to that of being the object of passing fancy to a prince, whose fickleness in such matters was already proverbial. Her resistance only inflamed Henry's passion, till, becoming hopeless of succeeding in his pursuit of her while her engagement to the duke continued, he presumed so far on his royal authority as to threaten that nobleman with his personal resentment if he did not at once resign his claims to her hand, warning him with too significant plainness that neither in war nor in love would he endure a rival.

Bellegarde retired from the field, but his renunciation of his pretensions did not at first assist the king, whom for some time the lady regarded with resentment, as the cause of the disappointment of her honorable love. But he was as unremitting in his attentions as the lowliest of his subjects could have been. Though his letters were returned unopened, he ceased not to write; though his presents were rejected he laid them in endless profusion at her feet, and at last the assiduity of a monarch, well practised in all the gallantry of a lover, began to produce its effect on her fancy. She was also not without ambition, and it is probable that Henry already held out to her the hope, which he subsequently was eager to realize, that, on his divorce from Margaret, he would make her his wife. The next step in the arrangement presents a curious illustration of the manners and principles of the age. She agreed to become Henry's mistress, but her family felt that their honour would be impeached if

she were not also provided with a husband. The Baron de Liancour, a widower of mature age, had already been among her suitors, and was so ardent an admirer of her charms, that he was willing to marry her on the understanding that he was to share her with his sovereign; at least, that was evidently his expectation, but it was not the intention of the lady nor of Henry. On the contrary, Henry promised to carry her off within an hour of her marriage, and, in reliance on this promise, she joined her vows at the altar with those of the baron. But she was doomed to some slight disappointment. The charms of the city of Paris, which the king was at that time besieging, were more attractive than even hers; and on the very day of her marriage a plan presented itself for surprising it, which Biron and some of his other adherents recommended to him so strongly, that instead of repairing to Cœuvres* to keep his promise to the lady, he remained in the camp to devote himself to its execution. It failed through the vigilance of M. Belin, the governor; and Henry consoled himself for his discomfiture by a triumph of a different kind. He invited the newly-married couple to attend him, and, as soon as they arrived, banished the husband from his court, commanding him to spend the rest of his days at a castle which he possessed in a distant province, while he detained the lady, a now willing captive to his authority and his love.

In the eyes of the multitude the coronation greatly strengthened Henry's authority, as setting on it the seal of the Church; and this effect of the ceremony

* Near Soissons.

was seen most convincingly in the surrender of Paris, which took place in less than a month afterwards. None were so clamorous for peace as the citizens of the metropolis; and Mayenne, doubting the power, or perhaps the inclination of the governor, the Marquis de Belin, to repress their murmuring with sufficient firmness, removed him, and entrusted the city to the Count de Brissac, whom, by his violence on the day of the Barricades, and his defiance of the royal authority on other occasions, he looked upon as more deeply committed to the cause of the League than almost any other noble. And having placed him at the head of affairs in the capital, he prepared to rejoin the army to make arrangements for the coming campaign. His conduct, however, showed he did not really feel all the confidence in the fidelity of his new governor, or of the citizens in general, which he thought it politic to profess. On the eve of his departure he made them a speech in which he exhorted them to remain steadfast in their principles by reminding them that to their protection he left his wife, his children, his mother and sister, all, in fact, that was dearest to him in the world. But, in spite of this touching appeal to their feelings, the next morning he took his wife and children with him; and the events which followed showed that his distrust was better founded than his confidence.

In civil war no past offence is inexpiable, and M. Brissac was quite aware that it was now in his power to do the king a service that would entirely efface the recollection of his former disloyalty; in fact, the more deeply he was compromised by his former conduct the more necessary did it seem to him to make his peace with Henry; and he was equally

aware that the earliest defections are those which are best appreciated and most richly rewarded. Accordingly, Mayenne had hardly passed out of the gates before Brissac began to sound the king as to the terms which he might expect, and he found him ready to put on his adhesion a price at which he himself had hardly ventured to estimate it. A complete amnesty was promised to all the Parisians; perfect security for their religion, with a renewal of the interdict against any performance of Protestant worship within ten leagues of the city. The governor himself was to be confirmed in his military rank of Marshal of France, and in his governments, and was also to have a large sum of money, 200,000 crowns, with a considerable yearly pension, while several of the chief officers of the city, whose co-operation in the projected surrender Brissac considered indispensable, were to receive rewards in proportion to their rank.

The conditions of the surrender of the great city were therefore soon settled, and, as every one was interested in promptitude, no unnecessary delays took place in their performance. It was the 6th of March when Mayenne left Paris. On the night of the 21st of the same month Henry moved up a sufficient detachment of his army, about 8000 men, to the Porte Neuve; and soon after four the next morning M. de St. Luc, one of his most skilful officers, and the brother-in-law of M. Brissac, was admitted within the gate, which he at once threw open to his comrades. As regarded his own officers, Brissac's task had been easy; but there was also a strong force of Spaniards and Walloons in the city, under command of the Spanish ambassador, the Duke de Feria, and rumours of what was in agitation had reached that officer,

who, so completely was the League in subjection to Philip, had summoned De Brissac before him, as if he too, the Governor of Paris, and a Marshal of France, had been under his orders, and it was only by great address that De Brissac had succeeded in lulling his suspicions. But even had he failed in so doing, a few foreign soldiers would have been impotent to contend against the will of the entire city; and as soon as St. Luc, with a few hundred men, had been made master of one gate, the enterprise was wholly achieved. A company of Walloons did indeed make a show of resistance, but they were instantly overpowered by the Swiss guard. The Marquis de Belin, who had been dispossessed of his government for the express purpose of preventing what was now taking place, the Duke de Bellegarde, and other officers followed, each at the head of a division; and presently Henry himself entered the city. On the Pont Neuf he was met by the provost, who presented him the keys; De Brissac shouted "Vive le Roi!" the cry was repeated by a multitude which had already collected, though day had scarcely broken; and amid these acclamations Henry entered his capital as its master.* He first marched to Nôtre-Dame, where the priests were in waiting to receive him, that he might return thanks to God for his success, and then turned back and took up his quarters in the Louvre.

With the exception of the slaughter of a few of the

* Some eloquent descriptions have been wasted by English writers on his charger, the grace with which he bowed down to his saddle-bow, his page who carried his helmet and sword, &c., &c.; but Davila, from whom I have taken these details, and who, indeed, is the authority whom Sismondi and all the best writers have followed, assures us that he was completely armed, and on foot. "Dopo di questi marchiava Il Re, similmente a piedi, coperto di tutte arme."—Lib. xiv.

Walloon troops in their resistance to the guards, not a single drop of blood had been shed. The Spanish soldiers perceived that they were outnumbered; and when, in the afternoon, Henry sent them permission to retire without molestation, they gladly availed themselves of the indulgence. He sent similar messages to the princesses of Mayenne's family, to the Pope's legate, and to some of the bishops and chief supporters of the League who were in the city. They also departed, but in no great hurry, the princesses even remaining for the evening in the palace; and the Duchess de Montpensier, who, of the whole party, had been the most furious and unscrupulous, passing it in a game of cards with the king himself.* The Bastille and the Castle of Vincennes were still held by Mayenne's garrisons; but, as they depended for their daily supply of food on the city markets, they were unable to hold out long. On the 26th their governors, M. du Bourg and M. de Beaulieu, surrendered them, and the submission of the whole city was complete.

The impression made at first by Henry's generosity towards his chief opponents was strengthened by his general affability and kindliness to all. Whenever he appeared in the streets the people thronged round him; and when his officers would have ordered the crowd back to a more respectful distance, "Let them come," he would say; "they are famishing for the sight of a king." He professed to feel when among the citizens as a father with his children;† and the unguarded way in which he went about in a city in which a week before his life would not have been safe for a moment, showed that the regard and confidence

* Perefixe, i. 228.

† D'Anquetil, liv. viii.

which he professed were sincere. Such conduct was as politic as it was magnanimous, for the report of it quickly reached other cities, and the assurance thus given to the citizens of the real pardon which awaited them powerfully disposed them to agree with, and even in some instances to anticipate, their governors in their submission to so fatherly a sovereign.

The importance of the acquisition thus peacefully made could not be overrated, though Paris was not yet what it was in the time of the Revolution, of such weight as to cause its example to be instantly followed over the whole country. Still, besides its reputation as the capital of the kingdom, it was the seat of all the offices of government, of the Parliament, of the Sorbonne, and the depository of all the public records; and its acknowledgment of allegiance to Henry as king set the seal to his recent coronation, and left no outward ceremony or visible mark of royal authority wanting. He began at once to efface from the public records and monuments all memorials and traces of the events of the last few years during which the city had been in rebellion against him; and the delicacy as well as the humanity of this conduct had a powerful effect in permanently securing the attachment of those who might have feared that their conduct was forgiven only in appearance, and would be still secretly remembered to their prejudice. His policy was to lead them to forget their former enmity to him by appearing to have already forgotten it himself; and this magnanimity had its abundant reward in the steady fidelity, during the rest of his life, of the very men who had previously been most bitter against him. If any of his subjects had reason to complain of him it was rather they who had been

faithful to him from the first, but who now too often saw the new converts, as they fancied, preferred to themselves, or at all events, far more liberally rewarded. Of these many did complain, murmuring loudly at the neglect with which they imagined themselves to be treated, as a flagrant instance of the proverbial ingratitude of princes. It cannot be denied that, as will be seen more than once in the course of our narrative, these complaints were not without some foundation, though great allowance must be made for a prince who came to a kingdom as impoverished as France was at the end of the civil wars, and who had so many difficulties of all kinds to contend with. It must also be remembered that some of his adherents were inclined greatly to overrate their services, and* Sully has recorded a conversation which the king held with him on the subject of the discontent of his old supporters, of which he was well aware, and in which he justified himself by enumerating some of the claims which had been addressed to him, of a most exorbitant and preposterous character, while those who had preferred them resented his refusal by endeavouring to create a general distrust of him among his friends. And his faithful councillor, whose constant treatment certainly shows that Henry was not always unable gratefully to appreciate loyal and honest service, seems to have agreed with him as to the cases which he mentioned, and to have felt that, in general, the fault lay not in the king's want of gratitude, but in the subject's want of moderation. At all events, the confidence which Henry so proudly placed in those who had been his enemies was well

* Econ. Royales, ii. 24.

repaid. The Parliament of Paris had been prominent in its support of the League, but one of his first edicts secured the members from the chastisement which they had feared for their disloyalty, and in return they were eager to show that they deserved his liberality, and to condemn the League which they had formerly supported. The Sorbonne, too, whose violence against him we have recorded, was now equally zealous in his cause. The leading members deposed their former rector, Antoine de Vincy, a busy Leaguer, and substituted for him Jacques d'Amboise, an equally determined royalist, while a committee was appointed to draw up a formal decree that "he was their true and legitimate king, the lord and natural heir of the kingdoms of France and Navarre, whom all his subjects were bound to obey."

We have seen the successful resistance made by Rouen to the royal arms two years before; but now, when the Marquis de Villars heard of De Brissac's exploit at Paris, and of the reward which he had received, he became desirous of imitating it. Even before the coronation Rosny had opened a negotiation with him on the king's part, knowing that Philip was also tampering with him to secure his adhesion to his interests, and feeling pretty sure that the highest bidder would have it. But it was not easy for the king to bid high enough, for not only was that gallant soldier the most insatiable of all courtiers, but the favours which he demanded as the price of his desertion of his party were exactly those which Henry could not grant without running the risk of offending those who had long been among his most zealous and faithful servants. Villars not only stipulated to retain his present government, a very natural expectation, but he re-

quired also to be for the future independent of the Governor of Normandy. That post was held by the Duke de Montpensier, who had adhered to the king when every consideration of family ties and personal interest would have seemed to bind him to Mayenne, and to deprive him of his legitimate authority over the chief towns in his province would have been a direct insult. Villars demanded also to be confirmed in the dignity of Admiral of France, which the League had conferred on him, but which on the king's side had been long held by the younger Biron, whose services to Henry up to this time had been surpassed by those of no other subject.* He also required the town of Fécamp to be placed in his hands, which could only be done by taking it from a most gallant officer, Captain Bois Rosé, who had won it for Henry by an act of skilful hardihood scarcely paralleled in the annals of French enterprise. And besides these demands, which could only be gratified at the expense of others, he put in a claim for other governments, for towns and estates almost without number, for the power of making many important promotions and appointments, for an enormous sum of ready money for the payment of his debts, and a yearly pension of 60,000 francs, a sum so large in those days, that when, a year or two afterwards, Henry was contemplating a divorce from Margaret, the sister and daughter of former kings of France, the pension which she demanded as the price of her

* The elder Biron had been killed at Epernay a year before; and the dukedom was now held by the son, who has been previously spoken of in these pages as the Baron de Biron, whose gallantry and military skill were quite equal to his father's; and who, originally at all events, was quite as fully devoted to Henry's service.

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consent to the surrender of her crown was only one third of that sum. And, while advancing these preposterous claims, Villars expected to be treated as one who was not solicitous for sordid gain, but who only desired these favours as a proof that the king felt a proper esteem for his talents and a just confidence in his desire to serve him; as what was necessary, in short, for his own self-respect. And perhaps there can be no more striking proof of the difficulties which Henry had to encounter than the fact that Rosny, who conducted the negotiation, and who was at all times disposed to the very strictest economy of the king's resources, saw nothing extraordinary in these demands, and granted them at once, though not quite certain how they, at whose expense the rapacity of the marquis was to be satisfied, were to be compensated.* And Henry was even more willing to accede to them than his minister; reminding him of the policy of Louis XI. at the time of the war of the Public Good, who broke the League formed against him by addressing himself to the private interest of each of the confederates; and arguing that it would be more for his own permanent security to treat separately with each prince or noble, and so to detach them from one another, than to arrive at the same end by a comprehensive treaty made with a single leader, who would thus be left in a position as the acknowledged head of a party which he might at any time render formidable.

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* "La plus grande difficulté ne roulait pas sur l'interêt. Il cherchait moins à satisfaire ses mercenaires qu'à se convaincre qu'en traitant avec lui le roi ne songeait pas simplement à gagner une capitale de province, mais à s'attacher un homme qui se sentait autant de disposition que de talens à le bien servir."—(Sully, liv. vi.), where he gives a full account of the whole negotiation.

When all was settled Villars had not so difficult a part to play as De Brissac; there was no Spanish ambassador nor Walloon garrison in Rouen. He dismissed quietly one or two messengers from Philip and the League who were in the city, and then, having given the necessary orders to the officers in command of the different forts, he walked down to the market-place accompanied by a train of officers, threw a white scarf, the badge of Henry's party, over his shoulders, and proclaiming with a loud voice that "the League was ruined," bade the people shout "Long live the king." They obeyed with enthusiasm: the bells pealed, the artillery saluted, and in a few minutes Rouen became royalist. The rest of the great province of Normandy followed its capital; indeed, the stronger places were mostly under the orders of Villars, and their surrender was a part of the bargain. Honfleur alone held out for a time; since there those of the Normans who had been most prominent in their support of the League had taken refuge, and it was not without some difficulty that M. de Montpensier made himself master of it; however, it submitted in the middle of April, and many of the towns of the adjacent province of Picardy, such as Abbeville and Montreuil, on hearing what was passing in their neighbourhood, voluntarily tendered their allegiance to their king, in spite of all the efforts of the Duke d'Aumale, whom the League had made governor of Picardy, to restrain them. It remained for Henry to satisfy those who seemed to be injured by the concessions thus made to the marquis. Villars himself had the grace to announce to the Duke de Montpensier that he withdrew his demand of independence to his authority, and Bois Rosé was willing to accept another

appointment and a considerable sum of money in exchange for Fécamp. To Biron the king gave an enormous sum of money, 140,000 crowns, and the baton of marshal, in exchange for his dignity of admiral; but the duke was greatly discontented, since the rank of which he was deprived was far higher than that which he received, and the treason of which he was subsequently so fatally guilty was probably only the ripening of the dissatisfaction, which, though he scorned formally to express it, he was at no pains to conceal. It is impossible to deny that the king's plan of recompensing his new adherents at the expense of his old and tried supporters was ungrateful and unjust; and that men who, like Biron, had borne the burden and heat of the day, had a prior claim to consideration over those who, however useful their services, had only rendered them at the eleventh hour, and then at least as much out of fear as from affection.

In all parts of the kingdom, cities, fortified towns, and whole districts now vied with one another in sending deputies to Henry to make their submission. But in some places of importance the League had still too strong a hold. Among them was Laon, in which Mayenne had placed his wife and children for safety, leaving his second son, the Count de Sommerive, and M. du Bourg, recently governor of the Bastille, and a soldier of high reputation, in command of the garrison. It had always been a place of great strength. Centuries before it had defied the arms of the founder of Henry's family, Hugues Capet, who suffered more than one repulse beneath its walls, and was indebted to the treachery of its bishop for his final success against it. And now it was strongly fortified, accord-

ing to the rules of the best engineering science of the age, and was fully garrisoned with 1700 men: its walls and towers bristled with heavy guns, and the town was fully supplied with every article of food and ammunition to stand a long siege. On the 25th of May, Henry invested it with 14,000 men; his advanced division of 5500 Swiss being under the command of Biron; while he himself covered the siege with the remainder of the army. It was certain that Mayenne would make desperate efforts for the preservation of a place at all times so important, and now especially valuable to himself; but Henry felt under no apprehension for his eventual triumph. "No doubt," said he to one who was once praising Mayenne's military skill; "no doubt Mayenne is a good captain, but I have always five hours' start of him." And so it proved in this instance. Distrusting the adequacy of his own army to relieve Laon by itself, Mayenne resolved on applying to the new governor of the Netherlands, the Archduke Ernest, for aid. He went in person, with a splendid but slow moving escort, to Brussels to confer with the Archduke. The councillors of the Archduke were divided in opinion, and consequently slow in deciding; Mayenne, too, quarrelled with the Duke de Feria. De Feria wrote King Philip a letter, bitterly abusing Mayenne as in his heart hostile to Spain; and the letter was intercepted by Henry, who transmitted it to the duke, to show him what kind of allies he was courting, and in the power of. Mayenne, in great anger, and not aware that some of the Spanish council were so much more unfriendly to him that they had proposed to throw him into prison, and to place his nephew, the Duke de Guise, at the head of the League,

sent an express to Spain to request permission to challenge De Feria to single combat; and, amid these discussions, accusations, and recriminations, three weeks elapsed before Mayenne could procure the aid he requested, though the army which was to give it was lying within twenty miles of the besieged town, and though the enemy against whom he sought it, was one who was well known never to lose a moment, at least before action. At last, however, orders were sent to the Count de Mansfeld, who was in command of a Spanish army of 8000 men in Picardy, a few miles within the French frontier, to join his forces to those of Mayenne; and in the middle of June the two commanders made a united attack on the king's position. Henry was surprised; and for a moment in great danger. The ground being thickly wooded was unfavorable for the movements of his cavalry; and his infantry was wholly unequal to a contest with the Spanish brigades which had been formed by Parma's discipline. By the consent of the whole army it owed its preservation solely to the skill and gallantry of Biron, who, at the critical moment came up to the king's aid with two companies, and dismounting and charging the Spaniards at their head, at last stemmed the tide of battle; while, on the other side of the town, the Duke de Longueville intercepted a large convoy of provisions which endeavoured to take advantage of the conflict to enter the gates. Two days afterwards, Biron, whose vigilance and activity never slept, learnt that a far larger convoy was preparing in La Fére, a strong town nine miles in the rear of the enemy. With 2200 men, 200 of whom were English infantry, he quitted his camp to intercept it. Passing to the rear of Mayenne's camp, he

took post between it and La Fére; his cavalry, of whom he had 400, he concealed in a small wood on each side of the road, while he himself with the infantry lay down in a field of high corn. The road was one of constant traffic, and the slightest noise or movement would have betrayed him and his force to destruction. But so admirable was the discipline of his men, and so great their confidence in their general, that they lay in perfect silence, though entirely without food or even water, for more than eighteen hours. At last the long expected waggons came in sight. Biron sprang from his ambuscade at the head of his men, and a desperate fight ensued; for the guard of the convoy nearly equalled his own troops in number; 400 waggons, heavily laden with food and ammunition, formed the train, and 1700 picked men the escort. Had the discipline of the Spanish soldiers been less admirable, had they scattered and fled, they might have roused their comrades in the camp, and the odds against Biron might have been too great for even his adventurous gallantry; but, though surprised and so taken at a great disadvantage, they stood to their ground in admirable order; formed a rampart of the waggons from behind which they fought desperately till they were nearly all slain, the rest were taken prisoners; and Biron, unable to carry off the waggons, burnt them on the spot, and regained his camp the same night. He had lost 400 men himself, but his splendid achievement had sealed the fate of Laon. Mayenne and the Spanish general, feeling that any other effort which they could make for its relief must be inferior to that which had already failed, drew off their armies and left it to its own resources. Yet still Du Bourg made an heroic defence. In several sallies

he cost Henry some of his best officers, and among them the Baron de Givri, whose bravery and fidelity the king had experienced in many an emergency: even after the explosions of several mines had laid open a great part of the defences of the town, he still repelled more than one assault; nor was it till the 22nd of July that he surrendered, the garrison being deservedly granted the honours of war, and being allowed to retire with their arms and baggage to La Fére.

La Fére, though within the French frontier, was in the hands of the Spaniards, having been given up by Mayenne to the Duke of Parma at the time of the siege of Rouen: under them it was an enormous depôt for reserve troops and supplies of every sort, and its subsequent reduction was an exploit of great difficulty, achieved by the king himself, and one on which he especially prided himself. The capture of Laon was the last great military operation in the war while it was purely a civil war. From the beginning of 1595 it may more properly be called a Spanish war, since from that date, Philip, instead of an ally of the League, had become the principal party in the contest. Town after town was now added rapidly to those which acknowledged Henry, but there was no need to strike a single blow for the acquisition of one of them. At last Mayenne's own relations began to desert him. The Duke de Lorraine, the head of his family, signed a treaty with the king in the middle of November, and before the end of the month, his example was followed by the Duke de Guise. Mayenne felt that, unless he would imitate their conduct, no resource was open to him but a treaty with Spain; and, in spite of the hostility with which he knew that he was regarded by all the Spanish officers in the Netherlands, and of his

repugnance, as a Frenchman honestly attached to his country, which in some sense he was, to bind himself to a foreign power, he began to sound Philip on the subject, retiring to Burgundy, of which province he was governor, for the object of carrying on his negotiations in secret, when the act of a single fanatic precipitated all parties into a line of conduct for which not one of them was prepared. When, on Henry's first entrance into Paris, he received the Sorbonne and the preachers into favour, one of the latter, while doing homage to him, warned him to "beware of the knife," and the year had not closed before he learnt what was the meaning of the admonition. At Christmas he came in from St. Germain to the Louvre, and in the hall of the palace was receiving the salutations of his nobles, when Jean Chastel, a youth who had been brought up in the Jesuits' college, sprang forward, and endeavoured to plunge a knife into his throat. Had not Henry stooped at the moment in courteous reply to the greeting of one of the cavaliers before him, the blow might have been fatal; but his sudden change of attitude caused him to receive the stroke in the mouth, where it broke one of his teeth, but did no further harm. The wretched criminal was seized, and, after a short examination, condemned to the fearful penalty of treason. But the investigation seemed to show that the attempt had not been made without the privity at least of the college at which the criminal had been educated, and the Parliament of Paris, gladly seizing so favourable an opportunity of signalizing its new loyalty, passed an edict banishing the whole order of Jesuits from the kingdom; and Henry, convinced that such a step would be regarded as almost a personal offence by Philip,

resolved to anticipate him in his hostility, and to show his consciousness of his own strength by being the first to throw down the gauntlet. In January, 1595, he accordingly issued a formal declaration of war; thinking it a stroke of profound policy, since it would deprive the remainder of the contest, till Mayenne should be subdued, of the character of a civil or religious war, and since hatred of Spain would reunite the different parties among his subjects more effectually than any other consideration. But the gossips of the Court attributed his conduct to other motives; some declared that he had been wrought upon to plunge into this war by Biron and Montmorenci, who were anxious for a grander field on which to display their military talents; and a still more common story was that Gabrielle, who had borne him a son, had persuaded him to the measure, in order to win Franche-Comté as a principality for the infant, whom he acknowledged as his own, a matter of which others felt less certain, and to whom he had given the name of Cæsar.

Philip was not very eager for the struggle; and, in the counter declaration which he issued, declared that he had no quarrel with France, but only with the Prince of Béarn (the only title by which he recognised Henry) and with the Huguenots; but he began to make great preparations for the campaign, and no longer delayed to conclude the treaty which he had been discussing with the Duke de Mayenne: in real truth, the war was politic for neither prince, nor had either the means of waging it with effect. The resources of Spain were so completely exhausted that, before the end of the year, Philip was forced to declare himself by a public edict unable to pay even the interest of

the debts which he had contracted; while Henry's troops were as bad as Philip's credit. In the judgment of the great historian of France, Sismondi, the military power and reputation of that country were never at so low an ebb.* Forty years of civil war had consumed her veteran soldiers, and had undermined her ancient discipline. Regiments were enlisted for brief periods of service, the leaders having no funds to keep them together when no prospect of pillage promised to secure the means of paying them; and the troops being equally unwilling to bind themselves for any time. All was license and disorder, and the inevitable consequence was that the French common soldiers, the infantry, had lost all reputation for skill and prowess; their inferiority to Spaniards, to Englishmen, and even to Germans was universally recognised, indeed it was admitted by themselves, since no French general dared to hazard a campaign without some auxiliary force of foreigners to support his own men. The cavalry, however, was of a different stamp. It was composed almost entirely of men of gentle birth, serving at their own cost, looking on themselves as peculiarly devoted to the personal service of the king when he was present in the field, and attracted rather by the honour of the profession than by its profit; though not disdaining pillage, nor making any secret of the extent to which they levied contributions on their victims.† For adventurous courage, intelligence, and fertility of resource they

* Sismondi, p. viii. c. 7.

† For instance, Sully does not think it beneath him to record in his "Mémoires," "Une partie du fauxbourg fut pillée: nos soldats ne sortiraient point de celle de St. Germain, qu'ils n'eussent enlevé tout ce qu'ils trouverent propre à l'être. J'y gagnai bien trois mille écus, et tous mes gens y firent un butin très considérable."—Liv. iii.

had no equals in the European armies; the only drawback to their use being that they were too much their own masters, not looking on themselves as obliged to serve any longer than was agreeable to themselves, nor bound to any duty which did not suit their convenience or their fancy. The king himself was just a cavalry officer of the highest class of excellence: undaunted in danger, indomitable in reverses, and irresistible in attack. Never having studied war as a science, he had no skill in nor perhaps much care for the arrangements of a campaign; nor in general did he greatly concern himself even about the tactics of a battle. In his idea the proper place for himself as king was where the fight was thickest; and his own dauntless example, adding fuel to the already fiery valour of the cavaliers who followed him, won him his battles, and fixed him on his throne.

The war with Spain was brief, and distinguished by no decisive battles in the open field. It is chiefly remarkable for the great superiority of skill displayed by Fuentes, the Spanish general in Picardy, and by the ruthless and faithless cruelty with which he tarnished his triumphs. It was carried on partly on that side of the Flemish frontier, and partly in Burgundy, where Mayenne's influence was supposed to be overpowering. But in this expectation the allies found themselves deceived almost at the outset. On the first news of his connexion with the Spaniards, the inhabitants of several towns and districts in the province rose in insurrection against him. The citizens of Beaune admitted Biron into their town, those of Autun followed their example; and Biron had hardly made himself completely master of these when the inhabitants of Dijon, the capital of the pro-

vince, invited him thither; though the governor was Tavannes, one of the most fierce and vigilant of Mayenne's remaining adherents. Tavannes, unable to hold the town, took refuge in the citadel, and the siege which Biron instantly laid to that stronghold led to the one incident in the war which is worthy of any particular mention, having indeed very nearly terminated it in a manner which would have given a different complexion to the whole subsequent history of the French nation, and perhaps of Europe. Dijon was too important a place for the allies to suffer to fall without a struggle. And Velasco, the governor of Milan, having received orders to invade France from the south, and having crossed the Alps, joined his forces to those of Mayenne himself, and after the delay of a few hours spent in expelling from Vesoul and some other towns in Franche-Comté the troops of the Duke de Lorraine, who had seized them for the king, hastened the duke to relieve Tavannes. Biron, apprehensive of being overpowered, sent an express to the king to beg for aid; and Henry, seeing the necessity of supporting him, and being further stimulated by the importunities of his mistress, whose desire for Franche-Comté grew with the apparent difficulty of subduing it, resolved to lead the succours which the Marshal requested, in person, to Burgundy. He reached Dijon in safety before the allies; and, a day or two afterwards, went forward on the road by which they were understood to be marching to gather intelligence of their movements. He did not take with him above 300 cavalry, and from this handful, when he reached Fontaine Française, a village on the frontier of Burgundy and Franche-Comté, he detached two squadrons, one under the Marquis de Mirabeau, the other

under the Baron d'Haussonville, to reconnoitre in different directions. While they were absent Biron arrived with 300 more; but the Marshal had hardly joined the king when Mirabeau and d'Haussonville came back in great disorder, having fallen in with the whole Spanish army, which was close at hand. Biron with his troop dashed forward to ascertain the correctness of their report; and, on surmounting a small hill, found himself face to face with thrice his numbers, flushed with the pursuit of his comrades, and ready at once to fall upon himself. He encountered them, as was his wont, with the most undaunted gallantry, but was evidently overmatched, as he fell back, fighting stubbornly. Henry saw his danger, and, without even giving himself time to clasp on his helmet, rushed forward to support him. It was to no purpose that those around him besought him to think of his own safety, and to retreat before it was too late. To his chivalrous mind, to leave his gallant servant to his fate seemed impossible; and justifying himself to his advisers by declaring it less dangerous to advance than to flee, at the head of his little troop, which did not now consist of above 150 men, he charged ten times their numbers. After a few minutes the Duke de Thouars rallied the broken squadrons and brought them up again to his support; Biron, too, though severely wounded, still fought on; and these gallant leaders fairly drove back their assailants on to the main body. There the scantiness of the king's force was plainly seen; and Mayenne, who had no cavalry of his own, begged Velasco to give him a few squadrons with which to fall upon their rear. Had he gained his request all would soon have been over, for Henry and his men were quite exhausted with their exertions, and in no condition to make head

against a fresh enemy; but, as Parma had been deceived by Henry's rashness before, so Velasco was deceived now. He, too, attributed some judgment and skill to a king and commander-in-chief, and could not believe that he had exposed himself like a common dragoon, except with some object which he himself could not detect. He therefore feared an ambuscade; and refused to advance a single troop. And Henry, perceiving that Mayenne was moving up some bodies of fusiliers into the woods on either side, and contented with having rescued Biron, collected his squadrons, and now at last consented to retreat.

In after times, speaking of this day, he said that in other battles he had fought for victory, but at Fontaine Française for his life. The next day he regained Dijon, which Velasco refused to make any further efforts to relieve. Deeply disgusted, Mayenne opened a negotiation with Henry, who was not likely to be less generous to the chief of the party than he had already shown himself to his followers. He at once gave him all the assurances which he required. Mayenne sent orders to Tavannes to surrender the citadel of Dijon; and the League was finally broken up.

Meantime, in Picardy, the Spaniards under Fuentes were gaining great advantages. He failed, indeed, at Havre, through his own treachery to those who would have made him master of both town and castle; but he succeeded at Cambrai; and took Dourlens, in spite of the united efforts of the three French Marshals, de Bouillon, Villars, and St. Paul. With a force which did not amount to 300 men, they, through want of care and proper information, found themselves exposed to the attack of his whole army. The result of so unequal a conflict could not be doubtful:

the French were routed; Villars, wounded and unhorsed, was slain in cold blood, though he offered 30,000 crowns for his ransom; and, though the Duke de Nevers a few days afterwards succeeded in reinforcing the garrison, his exploit only increased the loss when the place fell, which it soon did. Fuentes sullied his victory by the most atrocious cruelty, giving no quarter. And Sully affirms that in this single siege Henry lost more men than had fallen in the three victories of Coutras, Arques, and Ivry.

After Fontaine Française, Henry himself retired to Lyons, leaving the war in Picardy wholly to his generals, while he amused himself in the seemingly inconsistent occupations of dallying with his mistress and negotiating with the Pope for his absolution and complete readmission into the Church, which his Holiness had for some time made up his mind to grant without further delay. Indeed, he had begun to doubt whether the delay was any longer safe; and his doubts were strengthened by the same Olivier who had before insisted on his granting the Duke de Nevers an audience. "What," one day asked the Pope, "do the Romans in general say of the affairs of France?" "They say," replied the Auditor, "that Clement VII. lost England by his hurry, and Clement VIII. is losing France by his slowness."* This prediction he resolved to falsify. The Spanish Ambassador at Rome opposed the project as vehemently as ever, and endeavoured to form a party among the cardinals to prevent it. But Clement, though he promised the Spaniard to consult the Sacred College, thought himself at liberty to do so in his own way.

* D'Anquetil, liv. viii.

Accordingly, instead of convening the whole body to a formal deliberation in full consistory, he discussed the matter with each individual separately, and declared, as the result of his conferences, that two-thirds of them were in favour of the king's absolution. On the 16th of September, 1595, Henry, by deputy, presented himself at Rome. As, while unabsolved, he was not worthy to enter St. Peter's, a throne was erected for the Pontiff under the portico in front of the great cathedral; and when M. d'Ossat and M. Perron, in the king's name, had abjured his former heresies, and agreed to the conditions which had been insisted on as the price of his pardon, the chief of which were the concession of a number of privileges to the clergy, and an undertaking to persecute all heretics for the future, the Pope's secretary read the decree of absolution; the doors of the cathedral were thrown open, and the deputies, resuming their episcopal habits, attended Mass as the king's representatives. While Henry remained at Lyons he was also partly occupied in settling the affairs of his southern provinces, which he arranged according to the policy he had laid down for himself, of so distributing the different governments as to prevent, as far as possible, the nobles on whom they were conferred from obtaining any permanent local influence. M. d'Ornano, who had done him good service on many occasions, had been especially useful in securing the allegiance of Lyons. In the opinion of the citizens he had likewise aided them in several matters of importance to their trade; he was, consequently, very popular among them; and, as his reward, he hoped to obtain the government of the city. But the very circumstances which, in his view,

justified his expectation, were exactly those which determined Henry to disappoint it; and he sent him rather as lieutenant-governor to Dauphiné, giving the principal appointment to his own cousin, the Prince de Conti, whose bodily infirmities (he was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech) almost disabled him from the effective discharge of any political duties. In the same manner, though, or rather because the reduction of Dauphiné was the work of the brave Marshal Lesdiguiéres, he removed him to Provence as lieutenant-governor under Guise, disregarding the fact that he certainly, by such arrangements, weakened the authority which he might have exerted in those provinces in consideration of the advantage, which in his eyes seemed infinitely greater, of preventing nobles of such capacity from obtaining an influence which might make them dangerous.

When Mayenne surrendered Dijon he had only a general understanding with the king that he would no longer oppose him; but the moment that Henry had received absolution from the Pope, he thought himself bound to make his submission more regular; and a week after the scene at Rome he concluded a formal truce, which in the course of the next three months was enlarged into a permanent treaty; one of the clauses, of the greatest consequence in the duke's eyes, formally acquitting him and all his family of any complicity in the murder of Henry III. It was not quite easy to do so, since, though Mayenne was probably wholly innocent of it, it was notorious that his sister, the Duchess de Montpensier, had gloried in having been the original instigator of that crime. But the Procureur-General and the President of the Parliament, at Henry's command, went through the

farce of an investigation into the evidence on the subject, examining the informations and depositions which, at the time of the deed, had been laid before the different courts; and pronounced that nothing which those documents contained criminated any member of the House of Lorraine. All decrees which had been passed against the duke and his partisans were repealed. Chalons, Seurre, and Soissons were left in his hands for six years as security for his safety. A large sum of money was promised him for the payment of his debts, and the king, moreover, took upon himself the discharge of all liabilities to the different foreign battalions, which, as chief of the League, the duke had had in his pay. His adherents of inferior rank were all included in the general amnesty which was one of the articles of the treaty; and time was also allowed for the Duke de Mercœur, who still held out in Brittany, and for one or two other great chiefs, to come in and claim the benefit of it. The Duke de Joyeuse availed himself of the permission, obtaining splendid concessions as the price of his submission. But Mercœur was more stubborn: he claimed to be looked upon as a foreign prince, and to be entitled to a separate treaty, which, however, he had not yet made up his mind to solicit.

The edicts necessary to ratify the treaty with Mayenne were completed in all their formalities in the first weeks of 1596; and on the last day of January Mayenne paid the king a visit at Mousseaux, an estate lately given by Henry to Madame de Liancour. As he knelt before the king to pay his homage, Henry gaily raised him up and embraced him, saying, "My cousin! is it you, or is it a dream?" And taking

him by the hand, he conducted him about the gardens and the park, making no allusion whatever to the occurrences of the last few years, but talking of his planting, his walks, and designs for the improvement of the estate. He was a fast walker, and Mayenne, in addition to his unwieldy bulk, was at the moment suffering from a severe attack of sciatica, which rendered him almost unable to keep up with him. Henry soon perceived his lameness, and whispered to Rosny, the companion of their walk, "If I walk our fat friend about much longer I shall be fairly revenged on him for his hostility, for he will be dead." It was the only revenge he ever took. When the duke, from growing infirmity, gave up some of his appointments, Henry conferred them on the Duke d'Aiguillon, his eldest son; and for the rest of his reign he had no cause to repent his generous forgiveness of the House of Lorraine.

The Duke de Mercœur submitted before the end of the year; and, as one of the conditions in his treaty with the king provided for the marriage of his infant daughter with the equally youthful son of the king and Madame de Liancour, the others were more favorable than they otherwise might have been, or than, in the opinion of many, it was for the interest of the kingdom to have made them; and many grumbled openly that the welfare of the State was sacrificed to the establishment of Gabrielle's family. Philip was the only enemy the king had left. When Henry first declared war against Spain he had fortified himself for the contest by renewing his alliances with those foreign powers, England and the United States of Holland, on whose steadiness he could the better rely since they had private reasons of their own

for wishing to be revenged on Spain, and to curb her power. But his alliance with Elizabeth produced rather ill-will than an increase of friendliness; since the queen complained that the troops which she sent to join his army were not employed in the way she could have wished. And when at last she renewed her demand to have Calais delivered up to her, the positive refusal she met with did not increase her inclination to exert herself in a cause in which she could obtain no personal advantage. The truth perhaps was, that she now looked on Henry as having become, by the submission of Mayenne and the dissolution of the League, sufficiently strong to maintain himself against the Spanish armies without assistance; and after a time she recalled most of her troops, and transferred them to Ireland.

Yet it would not have been unfortunate for Henry if he had yielded to her demand of placing Calais for a time in her hands. In the autumn of 1595 he had quitted Lyons; and, feeling uneasy in remaining inactive while his marshals were fighting for him, he took a body of 6000 men under his own command, and with them laid siege to La Fére. That town was strong in natural position, inasmuch as it was so surrounded with morasses that it was only accessible by two narrow causeways constructed across them, and excellently fortified. During the winter he contented himself with blockading it by means of two forts, which he constructed to command the causeways. But in the spring he began to make more active exertions; and, as his army was greatly augmented by numerous battalions brought to its aid by the Constable, the Duke de Montpensier, and other great nobles, who having instigated the war, thought themselves bound

in honour to bear their share of any enterprise in which he himself was engaged, he soon reduced the garrison to extremities. Unable to penetrate through the king's lines to relieve La Fére, the Archduke Albert, who had lately been appointed to succeed his brother Ernest as governor of the Netherlands, and who, though a cardinal, took the command of the army, thought he might perhaps draw off the king's attention from that town by threatening one of still greater importance, and, within a month after Henry had returned to La Fére, he moved his army down to the coast, laid siege to Calais, and in less than a fortnight carried it by assault. A month afterwards La Fére surrendered to the king. But so languidly was the war conducted on both sides that nothing more was done in the year, as if the capture of a single town had been a sufficient achievement for either army. The next year the operations were still more limited, being confined to the capture and recapture of Amiens, then, as now, the capital of Picardy, rich and populous, having among its citizens 15,000 men capable of bearing arms. They consequently thought themselves strong enough to be safe without a garrison of regular troops, and their confidence proved their ruin. A Spanish officer, Fernando Portocarrero, was governor of Dourlens, and he, learning that the citizens of Amiens, though vigilant by night, relaxed their guard by day, under the idea that then there could be no danger of a surprise, resolved to show them that they were mistaken. Gathering together small detachments from the garrisons of those towns in the district which were held by his countrymen, he thus collected a force of between two and three thousand picked

men, without attracting any observation. And one night at the beginning of March he moved them up within half a mile of Amiens, bringing up the advanced guard even close to the gates, and concealing them from the view of the city in the adjacent thickets and behind the high hedges which came up to the walls. As soon as daybreak permitted the citizens to go about their usual occupations, the gates were thrown open, and twelve of the Spanish soldiers, disguised as peasants, some driving a little cart, others with baskets of nuts and apples on their heads, presented themselves. One upset his pannier of fruit, and the soldiers of the guard began to scramble for it. As the cart gained the centre of the gate another of the men secretly cut the harness of the horse, so that it remained stationary. And then the whole body sprang on the guard, surprised them, slew most of them, and made signal to their comrades in ambush. They sprang forward to the gate. The rest of the guard tried to drop the portcullis, but it was caught on the cart; the whole Spanish force poured in, and in a few minutes the town was taken, before the citizens in the market-place knew that it was in danger. Henry was furious, and, if the truth were known, in some degree ashamed. He had been at Paris during the Carnival, revelling and making the most public display of his fondness for Gabrielle, caressing her in the streets and markets, and provoking comments from all quarters, that were but little favorable either to himself or to the lady. The news of the surprise of Amiens reached the capital on the night of the Midlent festival, when the palace was thrown open for a ball of more than usual splendour. The intelligence at once awakened Henry from his

luxurious lethargy. "We must give up playing the King of France, and become King of Navarre again"* was his idea and his exclamation; and while the courtiers and citizens were still bewildered by the shock, and Gabrielle was weeping and wringing her hands, he broke up the ball, and instantly began to make preparations for the retrieval of the disaster. But, though a small garrison would have saved Amiens, it was not easy to raise a sufficient force to recover it without money, and money was, by this time, very scarce, not only in the royal coffers, but in every part of the kingdom. M. d'O, the superintendent of finance, had died some months before, and Henry, who was beginning to find out Rosny's great talents for finance, now entrusted him with the task of raising the necessary funds. But the edicts which he prepared for that purpose the Parliament of Paris refused to register, and it was only after a most stormy interview between the king and the president and chief members of the Court, in which Henry employed threats of absolute despotism, declaring that it was not to God, as they alleged, that they were responsible, but to himself; that it was his authority which had come from God, not theirs; and finally, that he would throw them into the Bastille if they disobeyed his orders, that they withdrew their refusal. By great efforts he at last collected 14,000 infantry in front of Amiens. In such an emergency even Elizabeth of England relaxed her economical ill-humour, and sent him 4000 men; while the nobles and gentlemen flocked in crowds to his camp, and furnished him with a splendid corps of cavalry. But

* Perefixe.

against all these efforts Portocarrero maintained the city as gallantly as he had won it,* keeping up an incessant fire from the batteries, a ball from which one day entered the king's quarters, and passed so close to himself as to cover him with dust; and making frequent sallies, sometimes in great strength. One such is particularly described by Davila, the historian, who was severely wounded on the occasion. At mid-day on the 17th of July the Spaniards forced their way into the besiegers' trenches, slew the men on guard, stormed some redoubts, and were only prevented from destroying the whole of the works by the heroic courage of Biron, who, with a handful of followers, threw himself into a narrow passage, and stemmed their onset long enough to give time for other leaders to come to his support; presently Henry himself reached the spot, his presence making the combat fiercer on both sides. For more than two hours the battle raged in the trenches, and, even after the Spaniards were driven out of them, it was again renewed by the cavalry, some Spanish squadrons coming up to cover the retreat of their infantry, and Mayenne, now in the king's service, bringing up a similar force to counterbalance them. At last the Spaniards, tiring sooner, from the greater weight of their armour, which was far heavier than that which the French wore, retreated into the town; but they had lost far fewer men than the besiegers, had greatly injured their works, and the honour of the day was decidedly on their side.

The resolute resistance thus made by Portocarrero

* It deserves to be remarked that Davila, to whom I am indebted for most of these details, speaks of 200 Irish infantry as forming a part of Portocarrero's garrison.

gave time for the Archduke to come to his rescue with an army somewhat more numerous than that of the besiegers. Luckily for France his tactics were of a slow and cautious character. No recollection of former peril could render Henry prudent, and, as the Spaniards advanced, his adventurous habit of reconnoitring in person once more put him in their power, if they had known how to avail themselves of the chance offered them. A fortnight afterwards they threw away a still finer opportunity. A day or two after their arrival Portocarrero had been killed by a musket-ball; but the Marquis de Montenegro, who succeeded him as governor of the city, if inferior to him in talent, was not less brave and resolute. He still held out firmly, but the Archduke knew that his stores were nearly exhausted, and that an immediate effort must be made to replenish them. He resolved, therefore, to attack the besiegers in their trenches; and, though his army was known to be close at hand, so careless were the French sentinels, that his attack had all the effect of a surprise. The truth was that Gabrielle was in the camp, and Henry was dividing his time between war and love. He was returning from a hunting party on the other side of the town, when he found his army in complete confusion, the Spaniards having suddenly crossed the river and fallen on the camp. It so happened that the Archduke first reached it, at a spot where a number of the camp followers and sutlers were assembled, who, taking to headlong flight, spread a panic among the whole body of infantry. They too began to flee without making the very faintest resistance, nor could the utmost efforts of the Constable and Biron restore order or arrest their flight. The Spaniards began to raise the

shout of victory, and had not their very eagerness to press forward terrified their general into an excess of caution, had he simply allowed them to advance when none were hindering them, the rout would have been so complete that the siege must at once have been raised. Fortunately for Henry he resolved to halt his men in order to ascertain the condition of the French. And for near three hours the hitherto victorious Spaniards stood still in indignant inactivity. The strange delay gave time for Mayenne to move up cannon to the weakest portion of the lines, with which he opened a heavy fire on the enemy; for the Dukes of Nevers and Montpensier to bring up the cavalry; and for Biron (the hardest task always falling to his share) to rally the broken infantry, and, by pointing out to them the inaction of the Spaniards, to encourage them to return to their position. At last Henry himself arrived, but the fighting was at an end. Before the Archduke could make up his mind to renew the attack the French were so well prepared for it that even a less hesitating general might well have despaired of success; a few desultory skirmishes between small parties took place in different parts of the field, but the Archduke drew off the main body of his army without attempting to strike another blow; and after a day or two, he retreated towards the frontier, sending permission to Montenegro to surrender Amiens, and to make the best terms he could for the garrison.

Stubborn as Philip was, even he got weary of a war in which he made but few acquisitions, and was unable to preserve those he made. And he found a reasonable excuse for terminating it in his duty of religious obedience to the head of the Church. The

Pope entreated him to restore peace to Europe, and gave the Cardinal de Medici, who at this juncture was sent to France as legate, an express commission to mediate between the two sovereigns. Henry well knew how necessary peace was for himself. His own hereditary revenues and the resources of the country were utterly exhausted; a year or two before he had described his poverty and the personal privations to which he was exposed in terms almost ludicrous when we reflect on his rank, and on the country of which he was the king. He said—"Though the enemy were close at hand, he had neither a horse to ride, nor a saddle and bridle to harness one with; his shirts were few, and in rags; his doublets were out at elbows; his larder was empty, and he was often forced to go abroad and beg a dinner from one of his nobles, because his steward was unable to provide him one."* To add to these vexations the war was making him unpopular in Paris; the murmurs raised against some of the conditions in his treaty with the Duke de Mercœur have been mentioned already, and on the loss of Amiens they became more bitter and personal, and satires and squibs against the mistress to whom that and other misfortunes were imputed were openly circulated, and even stuck up in the streets and other public places. But, however desirous of peace, he was resolved to sacrifice neither the interests nor the dignity of France (if, indeed, the true dignity of a country, or of an individual, can ever be distinct from its true interests), and he insisted that the treaty made with Philip at Cateau Cambresis by Henry II., nearly forty years before, should form the basis of the

* Sully, liv. viii.

present pacification. His firmness was successful, and, although Philip still held many places in Picardy, and one or two in other provinces, he was compelled to restore them all; and no foreign soldier remained on French soil.

At the same time Henry was conducting another negotiation: not, indeed, with a foe, but with a portion of his own subjects who had good right to reckon on his friendly disposition towards them; those, namely, who still adhered to the Reformed religion. Of late, he had shown them but little countenance, and they had made no secret of their dissatisfaction. Indeed, so deep had that feeling been, that, while he was engaged in the attempt to recover Amiens, a body, composed of some of the most respectable and influential of the Huguenot leaders had seriously deliberated whether they should not take advantage of the need which the king had of their services to compel him to pass an edict which should secure them the full enjoyment of that toleration which had been granted to them by repeated treaties, but which, in practice, was never shown to them. The majority, however, well founded though they felt their complaints to be, scorned to take advantage of their sovereign's necessities; and the idea was rejected. But Henry was well aware that the proposition had been mooted, and had found formidable advocates; and, to avoid all danger of its being again brought forward, and probably also in some degree to satisfy his own conscience by showing what indulgence he dared to those of whom he had himself at one time been the chief, he resolved to accompany his treaty with Philip with an edict in their favour. At times, in conversation with his most trusted councillors, he

drew a distinction between the professors of the Reformed religion, and those whom he called the Huguenot faction, of whom he looked on the Duke de Bouillon and M. de la Tremouille as the chiefs, alleging that these nobles cared more for politics than for religion, and were more influenced by a desire to oppose his will and to thwart his designs than by any other consideration. But he was aware that in his public acts he could draw no such line: and, when he came to ascertain the views and demands of the Reformers in general, he could not but own that they were far from unreasonable. In fact, they were willing to be quite contented with the amount of toleration granted to them by the treaty of Bergerac and other similar deeds, provided that their provisions were carried out with good faith, and not openly violated or perfidiously eluded. Henry, who had himself in times past, while a Protestant, been a party to more than one of these treaties, could not gracefully deny the reasonableness and moderation of the demands thus made, and appointed a commission of four men of high character for prudence and sincerity: Jeannin, President of the Parliament of Dijon, De Thou, President of that of Paris, and Schomberg, Count de Nanteuil, on the part of the Catholics, with M. de Colignon* as the representative of the Protestants: to embody them in a formal deed. It would be tedious and unnecessary to enumerate all the provisions of a document which consisted of nearly one hundred and fifty clauses; those which may be looked on as the most important

* Some authors speak of M. Schomberg as a Protestant also, not indeed of the Huguenot, that is to say, of the Calvinistic creed, but of the Lutheran persuasion. But Sully says he was a Catholic.

articles provided for the free exercise of the Reformed religion in nearly every part of the kingdom, except Paris and the surrounding district; threw open to the Protestants every kind of civil or military appointment; allowed them to convene meetings of their sect at any time, without any notice to or permission from the civil authorities; to raise money from the members of their own body; and also established in every Parliament a separate tribunal, to be composed of an equal number of Catholics and Protestants, which should have exclusive jurisdiction in all causes in which the Protestants, as such, were concerned. A small portion of the Huguenots were dissatisfied with it, as not putting their Church on a footing of complete equality with that of Rome; and the Catholic clergy were still more displeased, and laboured diligently to excite the University the Sorbonne and the Parliament against it, as if all toleration of heretics were treason to their own form of religion. But it was generally perceived to be a humane and wise measure, securing to the Protestants all that was necessary for the relief of their consciences, and granting nothing that was any real injury to the Catholics; and as such the king determined on ratifying it. He had need of some firmness in carrying out his resolution, for the Parliament had been so wrought on by some of the arguments brought against it by the priests, that they threatened to refuse to register the edict by which it was known that he was preparing to give the agreement its legal ratification: and they presented themselves before him in a body to make a formal remonstrance against it. He met their arguments with a characteristic mixture of condescending good humour, grave advice, and peremptory menace. He told them "that he

received them* not in his royal robes, or with his sword by his side, but in his grey doublet of peace, as a father of a family prepared to converse with his children. He assured them that his sole object in what he was doing was peace. He had established peace abroad, and he wished also to establish it at home; while those who opposed his intended measure wished for war. Finally, he declared that he had signed the edict, and would compel the observance of it. His will was reason enough. A loyal State had no right to ask a king for any other reason. He was their king; he was speaking to them as a king; and he would be obeyed." When he spoke in this tone, they knew it was no longer safe to trifle with him. It was on the 13th of April, 1598, that he signed the Act at Nantes, from which circumstance it has always been known as the Edict of Nantes. And three weeks afterwards, having returned to Paris, he there signed the treaty with Spain; thus concluding what is known in history as the Peace of Vervins,† because at that town the plenipotentiaries of the two sovereigns had met to negotiate its provisions.

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* Perefixe.

† Vervins is in Picardy, a few miles to the northward of Laon.

CHAPTER IV.

TWENTY-NINE years had elapsed since Jeanne d'Albret had presented her son to the Protestants at Saintes as their leader; and it had proved an anxious and toilsome and dangerous heritage which she had then claimed for him. At last he had secured peace: he had terminated his wars against foreign enemies by an honorable treaty, and had pacified the still more powerful and calamitous differences which had so long divided his own subjects, by a series of measures which testified even more strongly to his statesman-like wisdom and firmness. But, though it might seem that his dangers were over, the anxieties and difficulties which still surrounded him were as great as ever. The animosity between the two classes who had so long been waging war against each other, could not be healed in a moment by a formal pacification, which, moreover, had been forced on a large portion of each against their will; and there was still need of a steady hand to repress fresh outbreaks of the factious and bitter spirit which had so long raged without control over the land. That, however, was not wanting, nor was it unsuccessful; and the zealots on both sides, finding their slightest movements of discontent vigilantly watched and rigorously checked, were not long in learning the lessons of mutual for-

bearance and order which the law was now found powerful enough to enforce. A deeper evil, more general and far more tedious and difficult to deal with, was the utter poverty into which the long continuance of civil war had plunged the entire nation; the complete exhaustion of the resources both of the country as a whole, and of individuals, which to many seemed absolutely irretrievable. We have seen to what straits the sovereign himself was reduced; and in this, as in other matters, he was but a type of the whole people. D'Anquetil* remarks, as an especial evidence how thoroughly mischievous and detestable the League had been both in its principles and in its working, that, alone among civil outbreaks, it added neither to the credit nor to the wealth of one single person. We have seen that the large sums, by which the different nobles were successively bought off from the confederacy by the king, were demanded by them for the payment of their debts, by which they were all nearly overwhelmed; and the chief men among his own adherents were in no better condition. The destitution, therefore, was universal, and the very sources of future wealth seemed to be dried up. Commerce and trade were annihilated; manufactures had fallen into disuse; agriculture itself had become almost a forgotten art; the population, too, was believed, and probably with truth, to have materially diminished. It was estimated that, during the entire period of the civil war, a million of people had been killed, and 128,000 houses destroyed. What was worst of all, the corruption which nearly half a

* "Il est à remarquer que, contre l'ordinaire de ces crises d'Etat, celle de la Ligue n'enrichit et n'illustra personne."—Liv. viii.

century of tumult and anarchy had produced, was universal. Dishonesty, barefaced and unblushing, reigned throughout the land. Even nobles in other respects highminded and patriotic, looked on the national purse and the royal revenue as merely objects for the most insatiable rapacity, the most unscrupulous pillage: while, as the most corrupt of all had been the officers of different ranks concerned in the management of the finances of the kingdom, they had, in order to facilitate and then to conceal their delinquency, so complicated and perplexed the accounts, that it was almost impossible to know what the real resources of the kingdom were, what either the revenue or expenditure had been, and, therefore, where to look for the remedy. At the end of twelve years, when the assassin's knife terminated his reign, Henry could have boasted that he left behind him a people inferior in substantial prosperity to none then in existence. Order and tranquillity had taken the place of outrage and faction: economy and purity had superseded waste and corruption: the treasury was relieved of debt; the revenue was augmented; yet no class was oppressed by undue or excessive exactions. The merit, indeed, of these great reforms belongs chiefly to one sagacious, diligent, and honest minister; but no small praise is due also to the king, whose penetration discovered his talents and appreciated his plans, and whose inflexible resolution supported him in the execution of them, against the disdain of the nobles,* the envy of the courtiers, the

* The Duke d'Epernon, coming to the council, "fit une comparaison pleine d'arrogance et de mépris, de la manière dont il soutenait son nom, avec celle dont j'avilissais le mien, par la nouvelle profession que j'avais embrassé."—Sully, liv. x.

malice of the baffled peculators, and the misrepresentations and slanders of all.

The minister was the Baron de Rosny, or, to give him at once the title by which, as minister, he is best known, though it was not conferred on him till some years later, the Duke de Sully. He was the second, after the accidental death of his brother Louis, the eldest son of the Baron de Rosny,* a nobleman of moderate estate, but of so ancient a family that his son, in describing his descent, and tracing it up to "the ancient House of Austria," is at some pains to explain that he does not by that expression allude to the Hapsburg branch, but to the old House of De Coucy. His father had adopted the doctrines of the Reformers, and, having bred up his son in the same opinions, took him, when only twelve years old, to the Court of the Queen of Navarre, and there presented him to Prince Henry, who knowing the esteem which the queen, his mother, felt for the baron, at once promised him his protection, and took him into his service. As he grew up, the young Rosny seems to have conceived a strong personal attachment to the prince, which was cordially returned; though, at first sight, it would have seemed that no master and servant could have been more dissimilar in tastes, pursuits, and general character. Henry was jocund, Rosny was grave; Henry was licentious, Rosny, in a libertine court, preserved the strictest morality; Henry was indifferent to religion, Rosny's convictions on that subject were so strong that no personal consideration, no apprehension of danger, no prospect of advantage, could induce him

* Rosny is a small town in Normandy.

for a moment to palter with them. They were both brave, and both indefatigable* men of business; but they had no other points of resemblance; and the constancy with which the king supported a minister who, far from flattering his foibles, had often the courage to tell him disagreeable truths, and even to thwart his wishes, must be attributed to his deep conviction of Sully's worth, capacity, and fidelity to his own best interests, which is equally honorable to both. Previously to his appointment as Superintendent of Finance, Sully had been chiefly known as an artillery officer, in which employment he had so greatly signalised himself by science, skill, and likewise by indomitable courage, that, on the death of M. St. Luc, who was killed at Amiens, Henry would at once have made him Grand Master of the Artillery, if that post had not been begged by Madame de Liancour for her father. Subsequently, when it seemed essential to put that arm on a better footing, a task quite beyond the capacity and vigour of the old marquis, Henry arranged that Rosny should purchase the office of him; to which he himself subsequently added the honorable post of Governor of

* To the king's diligence, in matters of business especially, Sully bears remarkable testimony (Liv. ix.) He says that he has actually by him more than three thousand of the king's letters, and that many had been lost. He audited Sully's accounts in person every week. And in another place he praises the king's acuteness as much as his diligence: "Jamais peutêtre des ministres d'état n'ont trouvé plus d'attention ni plus de ressource dans l'esprit d'aucun prince surtout ce qui est d'utilité ou simplement de commodité pour un royaume, que j'en ai toujours trouvé dans le prince que j'ai servi." (Liv. x.) He even gives his Majesty the credit of being the original suggestor of some of the financial measures adopted: "Mes vues me sont venues en grand partie de lui; et je garde précieusement des mémoires entiers ecrits de sa main, quoique fort large, sur les sujets qui nous occupaient également tous les deux."—Ibid.

the Bastille. But before this occurrence, he had become aware of his still more peculiar talent for finance. We have seen that, when impatient for the recovery of Amiens, it was to Sully that he confided the task of providing the necessary funds for the campaign; and when, on the establishment of peace, he resolved that the very first employment of his undisputed authority should be the placing his pecuniary affairs on a better footing, he entrusted the whole finance of the kingdom to his superintendence. Having himself a genius for organisation, he formed a council, allotting a separate department to each member, as is done in modern ministries, of which he thus gave the first example. No Prime Minister was named, but it was soon understood that the chief authority belonged to the Minister of Finance. And his colleagues were M. Villeroi, as Secretary for War and Foreign Affairs; MM. Bellièvre and Sillery, who divided the Home Department between them; and M. Jeannin, who may be called the Diplomatic Secretary. But Henry himself was very regular in his attendance at their meetings, and reserved to himself the final decision in almost every affair of moment. And in relating the transactions of the remainder of his reign there will be but little occasion to mention any one but himself and Sully.

Sully, who has left us a copious and entertaining account of his life and administration, speaks of himself as endowed with a strong constitution, capable of great toil, as naturally inclined to find his chief pleasure in a steady application to business, and as having made accounts and matters of finance his favourite study. And it was fortunate, indeed, that he had such a disposition, for the task which lay before him

was one that nothing but the most indomitable industry, united to the clearest intellect and the most perfect familiarity with economical details, could possibly have brought to a successful conclusion. We have already spoken in general terms of the destitution of the whole kingdom at the close of the war. To give a more precise idea of the embarrassments of the royal treasury, with which Sully had to deal in the first instance, we may add, that the claims on it, what we should now call the national debt, amounted to nearly 330,000,000 livres; and that, while the amount of taxes collected from the people was 150,000,000, four-fifths of that sum never reached the Treasury at all; while, as of the 30,000,000 which did arrive there, 19,000,000 were required for the interest of the debt, 11,000,000, or less than 450,000 pounds of our money, were all that were available for the entire service of the State, since it would have been shameful to increase the debt in time of peace. To raise the revenue received by the king to a sum adequate to the demands made upon it was indispensable; and the first question which seemed to present itself for decision was, whether that end should be attained by an increase of taxation or a diminution of expenditure. As to the first alternative, the general poverty called rather for a diminution than for an increase of the existing burdens on the people, while the legitimate expenditure of the kingdom was, for some years, likely to be increased rather than diminished, since it was absolutely necessary to put the defences of the kingdom in a proper state by the repair of the fortifications of the different towns which had been ruined or suffered to fall into decay; and there were many public works, roads, bridges, and

embankments, which had been commenced, but discontinued, whose completion was necessary for the development of the internal resources of the country. It was requisite to find a third way, if the king were to be sufficiently enriched without a further impoverishment of the people; and that way the Minister's acuteness enabled him to perceive, and his fearless honesty, supported as he was by his sovereign's ostentatiously given protection, to carry out. The taxes collected he considered more than sufficient, if the expenses of collection were reduced to their legitimate amount. And clearly, therefore, in diminishing the monstrous disproportion between the sums paid by the people and those received at the Treasury, lay the remedy for the evil. But in exact proportion to the enormity of the abuses that manifestly existed, was the number of persons interested in maintaining them; and long practice had sharpened their ingenuity in corruption and dishonesty to absolute perfection. When Sully began to investigate the manner in which the Treasury had been defrauded, he was met by statements of privileges, perquisites, drawbacks, discounts, losses by bad money, losses by bad debts, expenses of collection, expenses for the conveyance of what had been collected, arrears, depreciation; in short, by every variety of excuse and subterfuge. And those who were, or who fancied themselves interested in the preservation of the existing system, if system it could be called, presented a list still more formidable. Princesses of the blood, among them even Henry's own sister, Madame Catharine, were at its head. Then came governors of provinces, governors of towns, officers, purveyors; but above all, every person, without exception, who was in the re-

motest degree connected with the collectors of the revenue, lived upon the proceeds of the most open roguery. Different branches of the revenue were farmed out; the farmers sublet them; the sub-farmers re-sublet them; and from the original contract, which rarely reached a fourth of the real value, every step in the arrangement was an additional contrivance for plundering the Crown.

Nor was the Crown the only granter of such contracts, though it was the chief victim. The holders of pensions, or grants, which were commonly secured upon some specified branch of the revenue, had established a custom of taking the whole proceeds of the fund which was thus made their security, on the understanding that they must pay over the surplus to the Treasury. It was a matter of course that there was no surplus; whether the recipients of the grant employed their own collectors, or farmed out the security for the sum due to them, the result was the same; the collectors, or farmers, or whatever other title they might bear, under some pretence or other, appropriated every farthing.* No one ever demanded a settlement of their accounts. If ever they presented any, they were so involved and confused that no one could unravel them. Sully struck at the root of these abuses. He suppressed all superfluous offices; the holders of pensions and grants he paid at the Treasury; not refusing again to farm out the sources of revenue on which they were payable, but ascertaining their real value, and regulating his new bargains by this knowledge. He acted on the same principle with respect to large portions of the royal domain

* Stephen's "Lectures," chapters xiv. and xx.

which were mortgaged for comparatively trifling sums, but of which the mortgagees had been in the habit of receiving and retaining the whole of the proceeds; while many claims, which had been paid for years, he proved never to have had any legal foundation, and for the future disallowed altogether. It may well be believed that in carrying out such sweeping reforms he met with violent opposition in high quarters. Some he outfaced. The Duke d'Epernon came down to the Council with the express purpose of insulting him. To his imperious language Sully replied in a tone equally high; and, as for a moment there seemed a chance of a duel arising out of the wordy war, Henry voluntarily proposed himself as his minister's second. Some he won over to his own views by friendly expostulation, and a single instance may serve to show his own patient and conciliatory address, and the prodigious extent to which the public interest had hitherto been sacrificed.

Among those who viewed the Minister's proceedings with the most open dissatisfaction was the Constable Montmorenci, who had a grant of 9000 crowns a-year assigned to him on some Crown lands in Languedoc; the lands were farmed, and the farmers represented that, when the Constable's claims had been satisfied, nothing remained for the Treasury; indeed they had even had the address to levy a sum of 2000 crowns a-year on the Constable for the trouble of collection. Sully announced his intention of taking the lands in question into his own hands, and Montmorenci, being led to apprehend that even the 7000 crowns, which were all that he had really received, would now be diminished by some further drawback, was loud in his complaints to the king,

who bade him repeat them in the Minister's presence. Sully, who, except on this subject, was on good terms with the Constable, willingly entered into details with him. He pointed out to him that for the future, instead of depending for his grant on the honesty or solvency of the farmers, and being compelled to allow them a heavy discount, he would have Sully's official credit, and the personal obligation of the king too as security, and would receive the whole of the 9000 crowns without any deduction; and in order to give both the peer and the king a convincing proof how necessary his measures were, by a demonstration of the enormous losses incurred under the old system, he declared that after the payment of the grant in question, there would still remain above 20,000 crowns a-year for the Treasury. Bold as this prediction seemed, it fell far short of the truth; the Estates of Languedoc themselves sent an offer to take a lease of the lands in question for 50,000* crowns; and thus, by this simple rearrangement, the Constable himself profited to the extent of 2000 crowns a-year, and the king gained more than 40,000. This may perhaps have been an unusually flagrant specimen of the abuses of the prevailing system, but in a minor degree the same kinds of frauds prevailed in every branch of the revenue, and in every separate article. And in each case where he could prove malversation or trickery, and there were few indeed in which he could not, Sully applied the same remedy. The leases of the different taxes, which, through the misrepresentation of the farmers, had been granted for rents wholly inadequate, he cancelled, and, putting them up to

* Sully, liv. x.

auction, he quadrupled the receipts of the Treasury without adding a farthing to the burdens of the people. These indeed he even from the first diminished, forgiving many millions of arrears to the general body of the taxpayers, and especially lightening the taxes which pressed on the land; for his first principle was that the land and its proper cultivation were the most prolific and trustworthy sources of wealth to a nation; or, as he expressed it, were the two breasts of the State. Of one especial burden he relieved the landholders, which, while pressing heavily on them, had been of very trifling advantage to the country or the monarch, when he abolished the obligation previously imposed on them, of maintaining the king's troops when marching through or quartered in their district; by another measure he extinguished the *ad valorem* duty payable on the introduction of agricultural produce into the different towns, or its sale in the public markets; a relief which he subsequently extended to wares of all kinds; and in the same spirit (though this was hardly a financial measure) he sought to increase the extent of land to be cultivated, by encouraging the drainage of marshes, and reclaiming districts which the sea had overspread.

He was equally solicitous to encourage manufactures, giving liberal bounties, and, in some instances, monopolies for limited periods, to allure those skilful in particular arts to settle in France. Thus, he invited workers in tapestry and carpets from Holland, manufacturers of silk and brocades from Italy; though some of the favours shown to these last proceeded rather from the facility of the king than the intention

† Sully, liv. xi.

of the minister. By these and similar other measures he so greatly increased the productive power of the kingdom, that he gradually became able to make even further reductions in the taxes; and the only new tax which he imposed throughout his long administration was one which scarcely pressed on the people in general; it was known as La Paulette, from the name of one of Sully's secretaries, M. Charles Paulet, who devised it; and it so increased the value of the article affected, that it was rather a bargain than a tax. It had become usual to allow superannuated judges to sell their offices to a duly qualified successor; but the sale was invalid if the seller died within six weeks, and in that case the post returned into the king's gift. M. Paulet proposed that a small annual tax, proportioned to the salary of each office, should be imposed on the holder, and that, in consideration of that impost, the judges should be allowed to leave their offices to their heirs to dispose of, in the event of their not having arranged with their successors during their lifetime. The principle of such a tax, or bargain, for that was its more real character, was vicious in the extreme, but in reality it wrought so little change in a custom already established, that the circumstance which makes it most worthy of notice is the pretext which a trifling modification of it subsequently afforded for the singular rebellion of La Fronde.

It is remarkable that, while thus solicitous for the encouragement of the agricultural and manufacturing interests of the country, he had but little regard for commerce, if, indeed, he did not rather discountenance it. Of the almost prohibitory taxes which were imposed on French shipping that entered foreign

ports, he took no steps whatever to procure the removal, or even the modification, though foreign ships were exposed to no such disadvantages in French ports, and though the French import trade was so valuable to other countries that the slightest measures of retaliation would have at once procured the relief which some of the council urged upon him. Consequently, though every other interest found increasing prosperity under his administration, the commercial marine remained stationary. And it is the more singular that he should have been willing to leave it so, because he showed a wise solicitude for the national navy, which has never existed in any country without an extensive commerce. In person, he examined the whole seaboard of the kingdom, visited all the ports, directed the repair of old, and the building of new ships; stimulated the care and ability of the pilots and other skilled seamen by prizes; in short, as during the civil wars the navy had fallen into complete decay, he set himself at work to create it anew, though well aware that it was a branch of national power which could only come to maturity by the patient growth of a series of years.* It must be admitted that in this matter of commerce Sully showed a deficiency of foresight; and that in others he betrayed an ignorance of political economy, as now understood; as, for instance, when, to counteract the effects of the rise in prices, or, what comes to the same thing, the depreciation of gold and silver, which the influx of those metals from the South American mines was beginning to produce, he prohibited the export of specie, and raised the nominal value of all current money. But such igno-

* Sully, liv. x.

rance, which at that time was shared by all the world, cannot be allowed to justify the tone of depreciation in which some modern writers have spoken of his career, and the benefits which France derived from it. It is undoubtedly true that the re-establishment of peace after so long a period of war would of itself have produced a great improvement in the condition of the people; but when those who assert this proceed to argue that those who honour Sully's memory for that improvement are, in fact, giving him a credit which belongs rather to the time,* they seem to be shutting their eyes to the benefit which a people, who, like men awaking in a strong light, might otherwise have been bewildered by the sudden access of brilliancy, must have derived from having their energies directed and assisted in the most profitable course; to the honesty which, instead of seeking wealth for himself, preferred the relief of the people; and to the fertility of resource and judicious economy which, while thus reducing the revenue of the kingdom, increased the efficiency of every single department. We have seen what the condition of France was when Sully became minister. When, on the death of his royal master; the hungry courtiers who swayed the weak mind of the regent, prevailed for his dismissal, he left the Treasury not only free from debt, but replenished, and able to meet not only all ordinary expenses, but any extraordinary demands which might arise. The fortresses of the kingdom were thoroughly

* Sismondi says, "Le peuple bénit la memoire de Henri et de Sully pour un bienfait reçu pendant leur administration, bienfait qu'il a tenu au tems plus encore que d'eux-mêmes." And of the minister himself, alluding to the mémoires of some of his secretaries, "leurs récits soulévent beaucoup de doutes et sur la netteté de son esprit, et sur sa parfaite probité." —P. viii. c. 9.

repaired, and more numerous than before; the old highways, whether roads or canals, were put in good condition, and fresh lines were being constantly projected and executed. The violence and brigandage of the civil wars had been sternly and effectually repressed; the supremacy of the law had been re-established; and the labourer and artisan, who had been encouraged to resume work, felt also that they were secured the peaceful profits of their labour. It is not necessary to deny that circumstances with which he had nothing to do, events which he had had no share in bringing about, had greatly contributed to this general revival of prosperity, in order to establish the fact that Sully's was the guiding spirit, and that it was owing to his energy, judgment, and fearless honesty, that the improvement in the condition of the whole people was effected with such rapidity, and with such little waste of its most essential resources.

Nor must Henry himself be denied a share of the credit for these happy results. From the very beginning he required reports to be made to himself of everything that was done or proposed; reserving to himself the ultimate decision of every question, and in so doing he did not take upon himself a task beyond his capacity. He was not a man of deep study or extensive information, but he had a large comprehensive mind, which, seeing clearly that the welfare of each separate class and of the nation as a whole were reciprocally inseparable, rejected every attempt to set class against class, or to benefit one at the expense of another; and subservient to, and co-operating with this, he had also an instinctive acuteness of perception and accuracy of judgment, detecting sophisms and disentangling fallacies, and seldom mis-

taking either the value of an object proposed or the fitness of the means suggested for its attainment. And these great and useful talents were under the guidance of as sincere a philanthropy, as honest a patriotism, as ever animated any sovereign in any country. His frequent expression, that he looked on his people as his children, and the wish he was wont to utter, that he might live to see the day when the poorest peasant in his dominions should have a fowl in the pot for his Sunday's dinner, were hardly exaggerated descriptions of the regard he really felt for them. At the same time it must not be denied that at times he unintentionally thwarted the plans of his great minister; partly by his facility of temper, which led him to grant favours which Sully had refused, and still oftener by his personal extravagance and indulgence of vices, which indeed he freely confessed, but which he made no effort to discard or restrain. We have already seen how his liberality to his mistresses laid him open to the imputation of neglecting the solid interests of the State to gratify their ambition or caprice. He was also addicted to gaming to a degree of which even modern times can furnish few if any examples. And he must have been a most unsuccessful gamester, if the prodigious demands which he made on his Minister of Finance for sums of ready money to discharge his gambling debts were necessary to balance his accounts of that kind. Forty or fifty thousand francs were not an unusual sum for Sully to be called on to pay to a single individual; and the duke reckoned that his master's annual expenditure on his mistresses, his play, his hounds, and other objects of personal luxury, reached the enormous amount of 1,200,000 crowns, a sum which, as he

sorrowfully remarks, would have kept on foot in a state of complete efficiency an army of 15,000 infantry.* Dangerous as it is to interfere with the private amusements or to reprove the personal weaknesses of a king, Sully was too faithful to his master's real interests to forbear to do so; but he produced no effect. Henry admitted the truth of all he said, the vastness of his expenditure on these pursuits, and even, after the death of Gabrielle, the unworthiness and avarice and selfish ill-nature of his mistresses; but he made no effort to shake off the empire of the vices which he confessed, and rather took credit to himself for rarely suffering the ladies in question to influence him in affairs of State policy; for shutting his ears against their slanderous disparagement of his minister, and for the frankness with which he often assured them that he would rather sacrifice ten of them than one such minister as Sully.

In the countenance which he gave his minister in all his financial projects, Henry had a second object in view besides the relief of his subjects, or even of his own personal wants, the extent of which has been described above in his own words. He aimed at permanently depressing the power of the nobles, to which, if it was not the original cause of the civil wars, at all events, their long duration and bitterness were in a great degree attributable; and at making his own authority as sovereign absolute. It was not an entirely new project. In the reign of Charles IX., a traveller of the name of Poucet, who had spent many years in visiting foreign countries, and had been received at the courts of many different monarchs, was, on his return, presented to

* Sully, liv. xvi.

him and the queen-mother; and, while relating to them the different spectacles which he had beheld, and the impressions which they had made on his mind, pronounced, as the result of his reflections upon the whole assemblage of persons and events which had come under his notice, that the only real king was the Sultan, as being the only one who had the estates and honour and lives of all his subjects completely in his power. In Turkey, as he described it, there were no nobles but such as owed their rank to their sovereign; no property held under any title but his will; no fortresses in any other hands; no religion but such as he professed. The picture which M. Poucet thus drew had at once attracted the fancy of Catharine, who anxiously inquired of him how France could be brought into the same condition; but, though civil war was one of the means which he pointed out for securing the requisite exhaustion of the nobles, whose territorial power and turbulent spirit was the greatest hindrance to so desirable an end, the march of events that soon followed was too violent and too irregular to allow any line of policy to be carried out at that time exactly as it had been designed. Indeed, at Catharine's death, the nobles were manifestly more powerful, and their power was more dangerous to the Crown than it had been at any former time; but Henry IV. had experienced this danger in a greater degree than she did, and from the first moment that he was able to regulate his conduct by his own deliberate judgment, he set himself resolutely to carry out the plan which the traveller had suggested and Catharine had approved. We have seen how it influenced him in the distribution of governments among those nobles who were also his military officers, and perhaps one very

remarkable execution, which we shall presently have to relate, was prompted in no small degree by a resolution to show the whole body of nobles that, as in Turkey, they held their honour and their lives at his mercy. Nor can it be denied that he had a far more splendid precedent than Catharine to justify the view which he thus took of his rights; for they were the very same that had been unhesitatingly put forward and carried out by the best and greatest of his predecessors, St. Louis himself; and the code promulgated by that virtuous and honest sovereign breathed in every line the determination to raise the authority of the Crown by depressing the power of the nobles.

But, eager as he thus was for the retrieval of the financial embarrassments of the kingdom, and for the establishment of his own royal authority on the footing which seemed to his notions most in accordance with his hereditary rights, and best suited to his personal dignity, there was yet one object dearer to his heart than any increase of riches or grandeur, the raising Gabrielle to share his throne as his lawful wife. He had gradually advanced her to the highest rank of nobility. She was Duchess of Beaufort; her first-born son had been declared legitimate, had been created a duke, and contracted, as we have seen, to the daughter of the great prince who had so long defied his power in Brittany; and each succeeding year added to her influence over her lover. He had some time before caused her to be divorced from M. de Liancour, and he had also opened negotiations with his own wife, who for years had been living a life of the most open licentiousness at Usson, to induce her to consent to a divorce and to join him in a petition to the Pope for such a sentence. Margaret, however, though willing

at first to facilitate his wishes for a new wife, demurred when she learnt who that wife was to be; but Henry doubted not that he had the means of compelling her consent, and proceeded to deal with other difficulties which he foresaw in the opposition of his counsellors. Sully* has left us a characteristic description of the way in which Henry opened the matter to him, beginning by a reference to the troubles that seemed in store for France at his own death, from the circumstance of his having no heir to succeed him, and the consequent necessity which existed for the immediate dissolution of his existing marriage, and the arrangement of a new one; and then passing in review the different princesses who might be supposed eligible. Apart from his royal dignity and the reputation of his military successes, he was not an attractive wooer. Hardship and anxiety had made him look far older than he really was; a long hooked nose and projecting chin left no room, as one of his mistresses declared, for love to perch upon his lips; and he labored under the disadvantage of most offensive breath; so that Madame Verneuil, a little later than the period of which we are speaking, was wont to tell him that if he were not king no woman would bear him. But he was as ambitious in his requirements as if he had possessed all the fascinations of youth; as he described to Sully the charms which he should expect to find in his new wife, she was to be beautiful, clever, good-tempered, witty, rich, of royal blood, and it was moreover to be certain that she would bear him male children. And, to say nothing of the difficulty of being sure on the last

* Sully, liv. ix.

point, it was no easy matter to find any one person in whom all the other qualities were united. Neither the Infanta of Spain nor the Lady Arabella Stuart of England would have sufficient dowry. There were German princesses; but no woman of that nation was tolerable to him. The sisters of Prince Maurice were Huguenots. The Duke of Florence had a niece; but though he certainly was now a prince, his family had not had that rank above sixty or eighty years; added to which her relationship to Catharine de Medici was but little calculated to render her popular in France. Those among his own subjects whose birth might entitle them to look for such an alliance were not more to his taste. Mademoiselle Guise was of too doubtful a character; the Duke of Mayenne's daughter was too dark; Mademoiselle de Longueville was too fair. Of the others, some were too young, some too old; some he did not like, without assigning any particular reason for his aversion; and, returning to the main point, he saw no surety that any one, however acceptable to him in other respects, would make him the father of a son.

Sully declares that he had no idea what conclusion he desired to come to, and having suggested, in joke, that his Majesty should collect a reunion of all the pretty girls in France between seventeen and five-and-twenty, and make his selection from that body, was thunderstruck at finding that Henry's object had been to lead him, by what logicians call a process of exhaustion, to admit that the qualities for which he had a right to look were to be found in the Duchess of Beaufort, and in her alone. He was too honest to disguise for a moment his objections to such a marriage. He pointed out to the king the great injury

which it would inflict on his reputation in his own kingdom and throughout Europe; how entirely it would fail to obviate the difficulties as to the succession to the throne, since the children born before wedlock, who were already legitimated by his royal edict, might refuse to recognise the superior rights of their own brothers born after wedlock; while the princes of the blood royal would in all probability refuse to recognise either, or even to admit the validity of the divorce from Margaret, on which any claims which they might have must of course depend. Henry bore his dissent patiently, complaining, indeed, that his faithful servant cared more for his state and dignity than for his domestic happiness, and from time to time renewed the subject. While Sully argued against it, Henry seemed to agree with him, or, at all events, to admit the solidity of his reasoning; but the moment that he returned to Gabrielle, the prudent considerations suggested by the minister vanished before her smiles and entreaties. She knew her power; and, having no doubt of her final success, as a kind of sign of what was impending, prevailed on Henry to allow her second son to be christened at St. Germain with all the honours usually reserved for the princes of the blood royal. There seems but little doubt that she would have eventually carried her point, when she died. It was Easter of 1599; and, not to scandalize the Church too much, the lovers separated for that sacred season, Henry going to Fontainebleau, Gabrielle to Paris, where she lodged with a foreigner of the name of Zamet, who, by farming a portion of the taxes and lending money, had accumulated an enormous fortune, and was often treated by the king with strange familiarity, and even confi-

dence. A day or two after her arrival in Paris she was seized with violent convulsions; and before Henry, to whom intelligence of her illness was instantly despatched, could reach Paris, she was dead. The moment that she was attacked she declared that she had been poisoned; and such was certainly the general belief at the time, though no one knew whom to suspect of such a crime. The physicians attributed her seizure to the near approach of her confinement; and there seems no reason to question the correctness of their opinion. In those days every sudden death of an eminent person was attributed to poison; but the very facility with which such suspicions were adopted should lead us to distrust them, and to require far stronger evidence in support of them than has ever been produced in the case of Gabrielle, who seems to have had no personal enemies, and from whose death no one could with certainty have promised themselves the slightest advantage.*

Henry's conduct under this sudden blow was singularly inconsistent. At the first shock of the intelligence he was utterly stricken down, despairing, inconsolable. He put on the deepest mourning, enjoined the whole Court to follow his example, and buried his dead with royal pomp at St. Denis, among the ancient sovereigns of France, as if she had really worn the crown which he had been proposing to confer on her. But these outward marks of respect to her memory failed to lighten the blow to himself.

* Those who believe that Gabrielle was poisoned, seem to impute it to some one in the interest of Marie de Medici. Some suggestions of her marriage with Henry had already been made, and it is inferred that those who were eager for such an event, saw in Gabrielle the greatest obstacle to its accomplishment.

The joy of his life, as he wrote to his sister, the fountain of his love, was dried up for ever. Thus for three weeks he lay weeping and mourning, rejecting society, neglecting even business, and refusing comfort. In a month he could permit his ribald courtiers to exalt the beauty of others above that of her whom he had lost, and even to speak of her death as a blessing, since it had saved him from committing an act of great folly. In five weeks he had fallen in love with a new object, Mademoiselle Henriette d'Entragues, daughter of a noble of that name, and of the celebrated Marie Touchet; and he was laboring to seduce her to fill the place left vacant by the death of Gabrielle. Of seduction, in the ordinary sense of the word, there was no great need. Henriette and her family had indeed scruples, but they were not at her becoming his mistress, but lest she should not get enough for her complaisance. She was handsome, she was clever, and fully aware that she was so; and that Henry was so easily enslaved by these qualities that a very little resistance on her part would lead him to grant all her demands; and her expectations were abundantly fulfilled. She required to be raised to the rank of marchioness; she was created Marquise de Verneuil. She demanded 100,000 crowns; Sully was compelled, sorely against his will, to provide them. At last she even required a promise of eventual marriage, if within a year she should make Henry the father of a son. And Henry gave her that too, written out with his own hand. Before he delivered it to her he showed it to Sully, who, if he had had the boldness to remonstrate with him against a marriage with Gabrielle, was not likely to be less free-spoken in a case where it seemed impossible that

Henry's affections could be equally engaged. He not only expostulated warmly, but tore the writing in pieces before Henry's face.* "How dare you do such a thing! are you mad?" exclaimed the king, in extreme irritation. "No doubt, sire, I am mad. Would to God I were the only madman in France." His honest boldness was thrown away. Henry picked up the fragments that he might make an accurate copy of the precious document, sent for his desk, wrote the promise out afresh, and delivered it into the custody of the lady's father.

But his acquisition of a new mistress did not diminish his eagerness for a wife, and for a legitimate son to succeed him on the throne. Apparently he attached no great importance to the paper he had just drawn up, as neither did the marchioness herself, according to the assurances which she gave him when she required it. She only made the request, she declared, to justify herself to her own parents, and was well aware that such a document could have no validity.† At all events, she was hardly installed as titular mistress,‡ when Henry's agents at Rome began to open a negotiation for his marriage with the Princess Marie de Medici, the very lady to a connexion with whom he had previously advanced such decided objections. Queen Margaret was quite willing

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* Sully, liv. xi.

† "She said that, 'Elle n'en aurait point exigé du tout, persuadée qu'elle n'était point d'une naissance à oser pretendre à cet honneur; mais elle avait besoin de cet écrit pour lui servir d'excuse de sa faiblesse auprès de ses parens.' Comme elle vit que le roi balançait encore, elle eut l'adresse de glisser qu'elle regardait au fond cette promesse comme une chimère, sachant bien que sa Majesté n'etait pas comme le commun de ses sujets, en prise au Tribunal des officiaux."—Sully, liv. xi.

‡ Maîtresse en titre, in the Court language.

to further this marriage by her own divorce; the Pope, willing to gratify both the Duke of Tuscany and the Emperor, whose granddaughter Marie was, issued the sentence without hesitation; and in the autumn of the year 1600 the marriage took place.

In an age so superstitious, when the highest and wisest in the land placed such faith in astrologers and magic, it must have seemed an unfavorable omen that the same season saw Henry once more engaged in war, though on a small scale. In the last year of the last reign, Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, who was possessed of eminent talents for both war and politics, had taken advantage of Henry III.'s weakness and embarrassments to expel the French from the Marquisate of Saluzzo, which lies between Turin and Nice, and to which he pretended to have an hereditary right, since the Marquises of Saluzzo in former times had done homage for their domain, sometimes indeed to the Dauphins of Vienne, now represented by the King of France, but sometimes also to the Dukes of Savoy. He enjoyed his conquest in peace for nine years; but in 1597, Henry, who was not of a temper to allow France to be dismembered on any side, sent Lesdiguiéres to invade the duke's dominions, with a view to recover the territory thus lost by his predecessor. That able general, without much difficulty, reduced some of the duke's fortresses, overran his territories on the side nearest France, and would, no doubt, soon have reduced him to submit to any terms which Henry might have chosen to impose, when all hostilities were terminated by the peace of Vervins, one of the articles of which stipulated that the right to the disputed marquisate should be left to the decision of the Pope. Clement

was bound to pronounce his decision within the year, and would have done so without hesitation if no one had been concerned but the king and the duke. But the latter was brother-in-law to the King of Spain; and consequently his Holiness, fearful to offend either sovereign, temporized, and withheld his judgment. Henry, however, was not inclined to brook delay. He felt the presence of foreign troops in a district ravished from France as a stain on his personal honour, and gave both Pope and duke to understand that, if the question were not decided at once, he should take the settlement of it into his own hands. Charles Emmanuel, however, confided in his own skill in diplomacy, and still trusted to carry his point and to be allowed to retain his conquest by more peaceable means than Henry had in his contemplation; and, as the Pope declined to receive him at Rome, and Sully rejected the bribes proffered by his agents, he resolved to pay Henry a visit at Paris, nominally in order to discuss the question with the king, but with a secret design of tampering also with some of the French nobles, whom he understood to be discontented with the king's government, and still more with his personal treatment of themselves. With these, as will be seen hereafter, he had some success; but when he endeavoured to tempt the king to leave him in possession of Saluzzo, as the price of his assistance in conquering Lombardy and the kingdom of Naples, he found that Italian alliances and Italian conquests were no temptation to a prince of such statesmanlike judgment,* but that he was resolved on

* It is singular that among the proposals by which Charles Emmanuel hoped to tempt the king to let him retain Saluzzo, one was that a

the recovery of what, in his opinion, belonged to him as a matter of right. The only concession the duke could obtain was an offer to accept, instead of Saluzzo, the county of Bresse, and the district on the northern bank of the Rhone, between Lyons and Geneva, which formed part of his dominions; and at last a treaty was concluded between the king and himself, on condition of his ceding, at his own option, either Bresse or Saluzzo before the 1st of June.

Charles Emmanuel was not ignorant that a weak prince should keep faith with one more powerful; but he was so persuaded that the discontent of the French nobles would render it impossible for Henry to go to war, that he chose this dangerous part,* and, when the appointed day came, refused to fulfil the treaty which he had signed. He soon found himself fatally deceived in his expectations. At the beginning of August Henry declared war against him, and poured his army, in three divisions, into Savoy: taking the command of the centre division himself, while Lesdiguiéres led the right wing through Dauphiny, and Biron, with the left, had charge to reduce Bresse. Sully, who for the moment had laid aside his cha-

French army should invade Lombardy, and, in alliance with his own troops, should expel the Spaniards and Germans from Italy; and that, when this was accomplished, Savoy itself, with one or two French dependencies, should be made over to Henry, while the duke should be indemnified by the extension of his dominions in the north of Italy. Henry rightly judged that the time was not come for France to seek for an enlargement of her territories in that direction; but it is a remarkable proof of Charles Emmanuel's foresight that we have lately seen his scheme carried out almost exactly two centuries and a half afterwards by his own descendant and Louis Napoleon.

* It is said that he trusted still more to the prediction of an astrologer that in the middle of August there would be no king in France; a prophecy that was verified, as Perefixe remarks, because in the middle of August Henry was in Savoy, making himself master of his dominions.

racter of financial minister to resume that of an artilleryman, having, with great skill and energy, accumulated, at very short notice, a sufficient supply of ordnance and ammunition at Lyons for the whole of the contemplated operations, Henry, with his old rapidity of action, quickly took Chamberry, Conflans, and one or two other places of minor importance. Lesdiguiéres took Montmeillan, the castle of which was reputed one of the strongest places on the whole continent. But the selection of Biron for the other command was not equally happy; for that great officer, who had long been offended with Henry for not putting, as he conceived, a proper value on his talents and services, had been entirely won over by the Duke of Savoy, betrayed the plan of his own operations to the enemy's officers, and even endeavoured to throw Sully into their hands as a prisoner. Still no treachery could enable the Savoyard armies to contend with the French, and, in spite of himself, Biron could not avoid subduing Bresse. In a few weeks the duke had nothing left on the western side of the Alps except three or four isolated forts. He could obtain no aid from his Spanish brother-in-law; and was reduced to solicit peace on the conqueror's terms. Henry was generous, and exacted scarcely more than he had offered to content himself with at the beginning of the year; only now he chose for himself, instead of leaving the choice to the duke. And he gave up Saluzzo for Bresse and the other territories belonging to Savoy on the right bank of the Rhone. A free passage into his territory of Franche-Comté was still secured to the duke over the Bridge of Gresin, but he was forbidden to fortify it; and besides Bresse, which was of great value to

France, it was plain that the treaty had secured the eventual acquisition of the great province of Franche-Comté, which, being now completely isolated from the rest of the Duke of Savoy's possessions, must be subdued whenever it should be attacked.*

The king's marriage with his new queen had been celebrated at Florence by proxy in October, but it was not till the second week in December, 1600, that the newly-married couple met to repeat the ceremony at Lyons. Henry was not very favorably impressed with his wife's attractions: he had seen a picture of her, taken seven years before, when she was only twenty years of age, but since that time she had lost her figure, and grown fat, while the expression of her countenance was singularly void of animation. Nor did he approve more of the train by which she was accompanied: the only person it contained of birth entitling him to a place in a queen's household, was her own cousin, Paolo Orsini, whom scandal accused of too great an attachment to her person. Another of her attendants was a Signor Concini, a man of wit and great personal graces, but of notoriously profligate character; while her lady of the bedchamber was a woman known as Leonora Galigai, who had assumed the name of that family of ancient nobility, but whose real name was Dori, whose father was a carpenter in Florence, and whose mother had been her nurse. Least of all was he pleased with her manners, which, indeed, had nothing in them either captivating or dignified. On the contrary, almost from the first she was peevish and unaccommodating, scarcely concealing her bigoted suspicions of his sincerity in religion, and

* Vide *infra*, vol. ii.

not for a moment disguising her jealousy and disdain of the titled mistress to whom, as she was well aware, Henry had forwarded the standards which he had taken in his Savoy campaign, at the very moment when he was professing the greatest eagerness for the meeting with herself. He was at equally little pains to conceal his disappointment with her; and, though he was detained a few weeks at Lyons for the conclusion and signature of his treaty with Charles Emmanuel, the very day after it was signed he returned with all speed to Paris, to spend a few weeks with his mistress, leaving Marie to follow at her leisure.

Madame de Verneuil felt her triumph, and resolved to make the queen feel it too. Marie, who travelled with all the slowness of royal state, did not reach the capital till the middle of February, where Henry compelled her at once to receive her rival, for whom, after a few weeks, he even fitted up apartments close to those allotted to herself; and there he spent far the greater portion of his leisure hours. It is not strange that the whole palace soon rang with daily quarrels. The mistress, however she may have disparaged the value of her promise of marriage before she secured it, had afterwards endeavoured to employ it as a means of breaking off the engagement with Marie, proclaiming its existence everywhere, and by virtue of it claiming the king as her own husband; and when that hope had failed, she indemnified herself by speaking of the queen with invariable contempt, as "the Florentine banker's fat daughter," even to Henry himself; while Marie applied far coarser language to her. The rivalry was carried out to the end in a singular manner. In the course of the autumn the

queen crowned her husband's wishes by presenting him with a dauphin, and three weeks afterwards the mistress also made him the father of a son, for whom she claimed equally royal honours, and to whom he himself gave the name of one of his most famous ancestors, the still popular hero, Gaston de Foix.

But the rejoicings at the birth of an heir to the kingdom had hardly been brought to a conclusion, when Henry's attention was called to a matter of the most opposite character. We have seen how the Duke of Savoy was misled into provoking Henry to a struggle, by reports of the discontent of many of the French nobles, and not only was there truth in the report, but it was equally certain that Henry had given the malcontents reason for their dissatisfaction; chiefly by conduct which, though they imputed it to jealousy or caprice, in reality proceeded from neither, but was adopted in pursuance of his settled policy of depressing the whole class as a class. Sancy, the Duke de Tremouille, with others of less note and inferior claims on the king's consideration and gratitude, all felt themselves neglected or disparaged. Duplessis Mornay complained of treatment which was little short of insult. As being not only a highborn and influential chief among the Huguenots, but likewise a writer of high repute, he had been challenged by Du Perron, bishop of Evreux, to a theological discussion on the subject of the Sacrament, on which he had recently published a book which his fellow Protestants extolled as convincing and irrefutable. The discussion took place under the presidency of Henry himself, and, when the victory in debate was adjudged to the bishop, Duplessis and his partisans openly

accused the king of gross partiality, in having ruled every point that arose in favour of their antagonist, and in having testified a degree of exultation at the result not becoming the position of a candid umpire. These men, however, great as might be their discontent, were not likely to let it lead them into treason; but unhappily the Duke de Biron was of a different temper. His exploits throughout the late war had proved his great military talents, and being, like his father, of an arrogant and somewhat rapacious temper, he was not at all inclined to underrate the services he had done to the king's cause, or to consider that they had been adequately recompensed. Indeed, it was well known to all the camp before Amiens that, even in the heat of that struggle, when all the rest of the army were extolling his brilliant conduct, the king himself had spoken disparagingly of his talents to his face. Biron had also certain knowledge that he had recently used similar language concerning him to the Duke of Savoy; and that prince had cunningly worked on his fiery and self-confident temper till he had won him entirely to his own purposes, binding the bargain by a promise to give him his own daughter in marriage, with a dowry of 300,000 crowns. To what treason these temptations and provocations led Biron in the Savoy war, we have already seen, and his disloyalty became known to the king, who, availing himself of his knowledge, led him to confess his malpractices, which, when confessed, he freely forgave; and wishing, we may fairly suppose, to save himself from the necessity of dealing severely with an old comrade in arms of such ability and such renown, and to wean him from his new and dangerous friends, he sent him as ambassador to Elizabeth of

England. The wise queen received him with marked favour, as one of the most illustrious of living soldiers, with whom, indeed, she had no general to compare; for it was on the sea that her own subjects had won their glory and saved the kingdom. Yet the duke might have taken a warning to himself from her discourse. It is said that one day their conversation turned on the death of Essex, and that she told him that that "unhappy man had been ruined by his own pride, which persuaded him that she could not do without him, and that, if Henry wished to be safe on his throne, he ought to follow her example and show no mercy to traitors."

After a short stay in England, Biron returned to his own country, when Henry gave him a fresh mark of his goodwill by employing him on an embassy to Switzerland, where, by his personal influence with those hardy mountaineers, he easily induced them to renew their alliance with France, and to reject the offers made to them by the Court of Madrid. But neither the confidence thus reposed in him by Henry, nor the consciousness that he had again done the king good service, were sufficient to make him renounce the treasonable designs which he had lately learnt to cherish, and which went far beyond the marring of a campaign, or the kidnapping of a single minister.

He had conceived a project of forming a conspiracy which should establish the great territorial nobles throughout the kingdom as hereditary and independent sovereigns of their respective duchies, such as formerly the Dukes of Brittany, Burgundy, and other provinces had been in France; and such as many of the princes in Germany and Italy still were; the

Duchy of Burgundy, indeed, he hoped to re-establish for himself; and the King of France was not in every instance to be even the sovereign lord to receive the homage due for these new principalities; some of which were to be held of the King of Spain. Biron had opened his project to several of the nobles who would have profited by it; he believed that he had secured the co-operation of some, and he confidently reckoned on the support of more as soon as he should unfurl the standard of rebellion; while he calculated on being able also to rouse the people to favour his attempt, by raising an outcry against some of the taxes, and promising their repeal. It was not however on his own strength, nor on the combined power of any of the French nobles whom he might allure to join him that he placed his principal reliance, but on the aid of the Duke of Savoy, and still more on that of the King of Spain, who saw with great jealousy the rapid growth of France's prosperity and Henry's influence in Europe, and was well pleased at the prospect of diminishing both by kindling another civil war in France, which could hardly fail to weaken the country permanently, while his own dignity would be greatly augmented by so many important provinces beyond the Pyrenees being held in future under the Spanish crown.

It is remarkable how seldom traitors make a good choice of their subordinate agents; and none ever made a worse than Biron. The confidant chiefly employed by him in his negotiations with the Duke of Savoy, and with the Count de Fuentes on the part of Spain, was a man of the name of Lafin, who, from the first moment of his employment, evidently meditated the betrayal of his master, and retained for that

purpose copies of all the most important parts of his correspondence, which, in the spring of 1602, he communicated to the king's ministers. Though Lafin mingled much falsehood with his revelations, including among those whom he denounced as accessory to the plot perfectly innocent people against whom he had conceived some ill-will, such, for instance, as Sully himself, the facts, of which he adduced undoubted proof, were quite sufficient to show the deep guilt of the duke and the danger to the king and to the whole State from his machinations. Yet even at this critical moment Henry remembered his great services, and would willingly have spared him, if he could have reconciled his preservation with the destruction of his influence; if he could have made it patent to the world at large, and to the conscience of the culprit himself, that his life was justly forfeited, and that he owed it solely to his mercy. With this view he sent for Biron privately, and had many conferences with him as a friend, in which he warned him that he knew much, and pressed him to deserve his pardon by a complete confession. Finding him resolute in denying all communication with the enemies of the country since his campaign in Savoy, he sent the duke's personal friend, the Count de Soissons, and afterwards Sully himself, to urge him to the same line of conduct; assuring him of his eagerness to find himself justified by his confession in pardoning his crime. But the duke who, having no suspicion of Lafin's treachery towards himself, believed that neither the king nor the minister had any tangible proofs to corroborate their suspicions, was deaf to all warnings; persisting in his assertion that he had nothing to confess. Finding all his exertions to save him thus baffled

by his own obstinacy, Henry gave him up to justice, which he resolved to let take its course. He and the Count d'Auvergne, the most deeply implicated of all his accomplices, were arrested; and a special commission was issued to the Parliament of Paris investing that body with authority to try the duke. His private secretary, M. Renaze, gave evidence against him more damnatory than even that of Lafin, affirming that he had had it in contemplation to put the king to death, or to seize him and convey him to Spain; and it seemed certain that Fuentes had made such proposals, though not equally clear that Biron had definitively assented to them. But on all other points the proof of his guilt was overwhelming; he was convicted by the unanimous vote of the whole court, and condemned to death with all the additional penalties of degradation of blood, and forfeiture of estates which the law affixed to the crime of high treason. Great interest was made to save his life, but all intercession Henry inflexibly rejected. The queen herself was prevailed on to add her entreaties to those of his relations; but Henry told her that his execution was indispensable to her own safety and that of her child; and the only relaxation of the sentence he would grant was to allow the execution to take place not at the Grève, the place where ordinary malefactors suffered, but, with some degree of privacy, in the court of the Bastille. Having stricken down the head of the conspiracy, the king could afford to be merciful to the inferior criminals: the Count d'Auvergne, chiefly because he was half-brother to Madame de Verneuil, being the son of Charles IX. and Marie Touchet, he pardoned entirely; a mercy which, as will be presently seen, the count repaid by

renewing his treasons; and the Duke de Bouillon whom he forbore to arrest, he also pardoned when he had humbled him sufficiently to make him throw himself entirely on his mercy.

He had now peace abroad and at home. Yet beneath the tranquil surface lay seeds of discontent which only consummate prudence could prevent from bursting forth in some dangerous outbreak. Those who were earnest in religion, whether Catholics or Protestants, all distrusted the king; the Protestants because he had deserted them; the Catholics, because from the alliances which he carefully maintained with the chief Protestant powers, the Lutheran princes of Germany, and, above all, with England, they looked on him as still a Protestant in his heart. England, indeed, was the power with which Henry at all times desired to maintain the closest connexion. Amid the difficulties which surrounded him on his accession to the throne, Elizabeth was the only sovereign from whom he received assistance: he had recently sent her two embassies, one that of Biron, which has been mentioned; the other a more private mission of Sully himself. And, on her death, which happened in the spring of 1603, he despatched the same minister a second time to London, to congratulate the new sovereign, James I., on his accession, and to gain him over to his views of the policy to be observed towards the States of Holland and Spain, not hesitating to describe himself as willing to co-operate with England in the maintenance of the Reformed religion in those countries on the continent in which it was already established. James, who himself cared more for what he conceived to be the rights of kings than for the Reformed, or any other religion, was inclined to look

on the Dutch rather as rebels against their sovereign, than as fellow Protestants, and had great scruples against giving any countenance to their resistance to Philip; but Sully's address prevailed, and at last he won him over to sign a treaty, binding himself to co-operate with Henry in assisting the United States (as they were then called), England finding the troops, and France providing a subsidy of money; so widely different was the state of both countries at that time from that which existed two centuries later, when England subsidised almost every nation in Europe, but was, in the number of the troops which she could employ, inferior to almost all, even to some who, at the time of which we are speaking, had no separate national existence at all.

A greater danger to the real welfare of the nation than that arising from the mutual intolerance of the two religious parties, though the fruit which it was likely to bear was not as immediately visible, was the utter disregard for all religious restraint whatever, which was displayed by those whose rank or position gave general notoriety to their conduct. Encouraged by the example openly set by the king himself, the licentiousness of the Court was universal, and exceeded even the worst habits of the previous reigns. Henry having added to sensuality the practice of gambling for enormous stakes, and selecting as his chosen companions not his old comrades, nor those who had proved faithful servants to him in time of danger, but either very youthful nobles, or, still more frequently, men of low birth and rank, whose position did not entitle them to any admission whatever into the royal circle.*

* See Sismondi, p. viii. c. 10. The Count de Bassompierre, Henry's

The Court had been no school of virtue for many generations; but it was Henry who established vice in it as its permanent inhabitant, fixing his mistress in apartments side by side with those of his wife. It is his pernicious example in this respect, followed as it was too faithfully by his grandson and subsequent descendants, that undermined that best safeguard of the throne, the virtue of the people; and the atrocities and wickedness of the Revolution of 1789 are but the consistent crowning consequence of two centuries of profligacy and impiety. In one point only did any reform of the manners of the age proceed from Henry. His predecessor, after the effeminate vices to which, when king, he had abandoned himself, had weaned him from the practice of warlike exercises in his own person, had taken an odious pleasure in witnessing, or even hearing of deeds of blood, and most especially of duels. His courtiers found no way of ingratiating themselves with him so certain as to engage in combats of that kind, which consequently became the fashion first of the Court, and very soon of the whole kingdom. On the accession of Henry IV. the fierceness of real war naturally led for a while to the disuse of single combat, but with the return of peace the fashion revived, and duels became so frequent, and were conducted with such animosity, that it was computed that in the ten years that followed the treaty of Vervins, at least 2000 gentlemen had been slain in them. Such purposeless

most favourite fellow gamester, was only twenty-four years of age. Of the others, Zamet was a farmer of the revenue and a money-lender. Beringhen was his valet. La Varenne had had an office in his kitchen till he promoted him to become his pimp. Pimentel was a man of the worst possible reputation, as a mere professional (and not always fair) gambler.

slaughter shocked the humane feelings of the king, and he issued an edict, enacting that fighting a duel without the permission of himself, the Constable, or one of the Marshals, should be accounted an act of treason; but making some concession to the prevailing prejudice by the promise that such permission should not be refused when it was found to be absolutely necessary for the honour of the applicant.

Meanwhile, Sully was proceeding steadily with his financial reforms, embarrassed at times by the prodigal facility with which Henry allowed grants, of whose real value he was entirely ignorant, to be extorted from him, though he was generally in time to prevent their formal ratification. But it is very remarkable that, while thus diligent and able in the measures which he took for developing the internal resources of the kingdom, he steadily set his face against the different plans formed by men of enterprising character for opening fresh sources of riches in foreign countries. And in this the king was wiser than himself. His sagacity supported the rest of his ministers against Sully on the question of sending a colony to Canada, where, in spite of Sully's prediction that no kind of riches were to be hoped for from any district in the New World to the north of the 40th degreee of N. latitude,* it flourished for above a century and a half. And it was owing to the same source, rather than to any favour shown to the project by the minister, that an edict was issued in 1604 for the establishment of a French East Indian Company, in imitation of a patent which Elizabeth had granted to some of her subjects four years before. The company was not successful,

* Sully, liv. xvi. *infra.*

neither at its first creation, nor sixty years later, when Colbert and Louis showered upon it all the encouragement of both ministerial and royal favour. But the cause of its failure, whatever it may have been, does certainly not lie in the project itself; and it is creditable to Henry's wisdom, as a king and a statesman, that he should have seen so early and so clearly the advantages to be derived from judicious colonisation, to which his great minister was wholly insensible.

There were, however, other political projects on which the king and the minister were in complete agreement: the diminution of the power of the Emperor and of Spain, and the aggrandisement of France at their expense. The diminution of the power of the empire, which had been Henry's favourite idea almost ever since his accession, had also been among the subjects which Sully had been instructed to open with Elizabeth, and one of the circumstances which gave him the highest idea of that queen's wisdom had been the finding that on it she had anticipated the views of his own master. The sovereigns of the two countries were so nearly related that the weakening of Spain seemed a necessary preliminary to the meditated attack on the still greater empire beyond the Rhine. And fond as Sully was of peace, and necessary as its continuance was for the further prosecution of his financial reforms, he yet encouraged the king in the design of carrying war into Spain at the earliest opportunity, holding it out to him partly as a temptation to a more rigid economy, since it would require a careful accumulation of his revenues for two or three years before he could be in a condition to commence operations. The memorial which, at the beginning of 1604, in less than six years after the peace of Vervins, he

presented to the king on the subject, is a striking proof of the great progress which he had already made in restoring the finances of the kingdom to a healthy condition. He had not only paid off a large portion of the debt of the State, and had reduced the interest borne by that portion which remained unpaid; but he had accumulated in the vaults of the Bastille 25,000,000 of francs in ready money, and was able to promise that at the end of two years more the king should find that sum doubled; and 50,000,000 francs would, he reckoned, maintain an army of 50,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry, besides those corps of gentlemen who would serve without looking for pay, with a corresponding train of forty guns, for a period of nearly three years. Henry willingly promised the economy required of him; but it was not in his time that France was fated to humble its enemies on either side. On the contrary, the very next year he was forced by circumstances to sign a treaty with the very power which Sully was now showing him the means of attacking. And meantime some events connected with the state of his relations with that country brought to his knowledge another series of treasons, which showed more forcibly even than that of Biron how many difficulties lay in the way of his pursuing the line of policy which seemed to him most consistent with the interests of France. It was not only that the Spanish rulers had found means to corrupt one of M. Villeroi's secretaries, who betrayed to them in consequence the result of the deliberations of his council, and the contents of the despatches sent to his ministers at the different courts of Europe; but that they had found means to enlist both the queen and the mistress on their side, Marie espousing their cause through pure

bigotry, and Madame de Verneuil being won over by Philip's offer of his protection to herself and her son in the event of Henry's death, a protection of which she thought she might then stand in need to shield her from the jealousy of the queen, and which Philip thought to turn to his own account, by the facility which it would afford him of setting up a rival to the dauphin, in the person of the young Duke de Vendôme. The king, however, was well informed of all that was taking place; and, having after a time obtained conclusive proof that she, her father, and the Count d'Auvergne, whom he had so lately pardoned, were maintaining a treasonable correspondence with Spain, he suddenly arrested them all, and brought them to trial before the Parliament of Paris. They were all convicted: the men were condemned to death, and the lady to perpetual confinement in a convent; but the sentences were not executed. In consideration of their relationship to his mistress the king mitigated the sentence of death pronounced against MM. d'Auvergne and d'Entragues to one of perpetual imprisonment, while the marchioness he pardoned altogether, on condition of her surrendering into his hands the promise of marriage. And after this singular episode in a love-story she resumed her place as mistress, though no longer the only one, since while she was under process Henry had filled her vacancy with another, whom he created Countess de Moret; and in the course of the next few months he gave her three or four more companions in his seraglio.

Towards the Protestants among his own subjects Henry behaved with what may be called a mixed policy, showing a willingness to carry out to the full the spirit of the indulgence which he had secured to

the whole body by the Edict of Nantes, and granting their request to leave in their hands for four years more the fortified places, which they had been allowed to keep for eight years, a period which was on the point of expiring, but being at the same time constantly on the watch to weaken the influence of their leaders. His especial wrath was directed against the Duke de Bouillon, who, since the death of Biron, had not trusted himself in France, but was now residing at Heidelberg; and, though desirous to reinstate himself in Henry's favour, was at the same time keeping up a constant communication with the German Lutherans, who looked on him as the head of the Calvinist party in France since the king's conversion to Catholicism. The influence which he manifestly had with them increased Henry's jealousy of him; so that he even took offence at his sending him intelligence that the German princes were proposing to form a confederacy against the House of Austria, and offering himself as the agent to effect an union between them and the king. Though the humiliation of the House of Austria was Henry's favourite project, he would rather have foregone it than have acknowledged and augmented De Bouillon's influence by employing him in the matter. On the contrary, the duke's proposal only made him the more resolute to diminish his authority; and, on the plea of his presence being required to check and punish some conspiracies which had been detected in Limousin, in the autumn of 1605, he marched into that province, rather hoping that De Bouillon would give him a plea for charging him with disloyalty, by refusing him admission into his fortresses of Turenne and Sinceray. The duke, however, disappointed his expectation by sending orders

that they should be thrown open to him, and placed wholly at his disposal; and he then turned towards his possessions on the other side of the kingdom, and prepared to lay siege to Sedan, an exceedingly strong fortress on the frontiers of Champagne and Luxembourg, which the duke possessed in independent sovereignty. Sully was accompanying the king as the commander of the artillery; and their approach, with the avowed intention of attacking Sedan, greatly alarmed the whole Protestant party, to whom the town, from its proximity to the German Lutherans, was of great importance. They prevailed on the duke to avert the threatened attack, which it was clear he could not long resist, by submission to Henry. He consented, and as Sully, though he was convinced that he could reduce Sedan by force, had from the beginning recommended Henry rather to try to gain possession of it by fair means, there was little delay in arranging the terms of the reconciliation. The king gave the duke a large sum of money to pay his debts, and the duke gave up Sedan to the king for four years; and having made his submission by the customary acts of homage, accompanied him to Paris.

If Henry's policy in such matters was not quite generous to those nobles who had formerly done him good service, nor to the Protestant body in general, there could be no question that it had been sagacious and highly successful, and that the perception of the solid foundation on which he had placed his power at home had given him great influence abroad; that influence being no doubt augmented by the changes that had recently taken place in the Governments of Spain and England, where two princes of no capacity or character now occupied the thrones lately filled by

the crafty and stubborn Philip, and the wise and resolute Elizabeth. And the most striking proof possible of the weight which he now had in the estimation of the nations was afforded in 1607, when the Pope and the Venetian Senate made him the umpire in a dispute which had arisen between them, and accepted peace on the conditions which he arranged. Almost at the same time he was acting as mediator between the Spanish Governor of the Milanese and the Swiss cantons; and when, at the end of the year, the Court of Madrid began to acknowledge the impossibility of re-establishing its dominion over the United States of Holland, with which it had been carrying on war for nearly forty years, the peace, which, after a protracted negotiation, was at last concluded in the beginning of 1609, was very mainly, and in many of its most important articles entirely framed in accordance with his advice, conveyed by the President Jeannin, whom for this object he despatched to Brussels as his ambassador.

The King of Spain was greatly humbled and weakened by this loss of the Netherlands: the other branch of his family, which possessed the empire, was weakened by internal quarrels; but these circumstances, instead of lessening the design which Henry had long entertained of forming a confederacy against them, seemed rather to quicken it; while Sully encouraged his inclination for warlike measures in the hope of thus diverting him from the pursuit of amorous intrigues which, as he advanced in years, became more numerous and more scandalous than ever. Henry had begun to entertain fears of assassination. It was rumoured in the palace that some astrologers had predicted that his end was drawing near; he himself had been warned that he should

die in a coach on the occasion of some splendid ceremony; and he thought no course so likely to enable him to falsify these predictions as one which should conciliate the Catholics, who otherwise were likely to view with suspicion a war against such pillars of the Church as the Emperor and King of Spain. With this view he became eager for the conversion of Sully and his heir, the young Marquis de Rosny, trying to tempt the father by the promise of the Constable's sword, and the son by the gift of his own daughter, Mademoiselle de Vendôme, in marriage, with a suitable dowry; and when these temptations failed he applied himself to conciliate the most dangerous of all the Catholic bodies, the Jesuits, revoking the sentence of banishment which had been pronounced against the whole order, founding a college for them in Anjou, enriching it with a splendid endowment, and compelling the Parliament (which hated the Jesuits more even than did the Huguenots, and which presented a formal remonstrance against these measures in their favour) to register these edicts without modification or delay. He even rased to the ground the pillar which had been erected at the time of Châtel's attempt to murder him, because it bore an inscription implicating the whole order in the guilt of their pupil.

Nor were those Catholics who might view with displeasure his enterprises against the other great Catholic sovereigns the only ones whom he regarded with apprehension. He had still greater dislike, and almost equal fear of Concini and his wife. For that supple Italian had married Mademoiselle Galigai, and the pair had become the chief confidants of the queen; the stimulators of all her jealousies and the agents in her plots; carrying their boldness so far as to send

forged despatches in the king's name to his ambassadors in foreign countries, and, on one occasion at least, to threaten that if he used violence towards them, they knew how to revenge themselves. And they had at this moment more plausible reasons than ever for filling Marie with suspicions of her husband; for, not contented with adding several subjects of inferior rank to his list of mistresses, he had recently become enamoured of the youthful Princess de Condé, and was conducting himself towards her and her husband with the most singular violence that ever was beheld in a love-suit, if indeed his pursuit of the lady can be called by such a name. He had even originally contrived her marriage with the prince with the express object of seducing her; for her father, the Constable Montmorenci, had promised her in marriage to the Count de Bassompierre, a young nobleman who was afterwards found to possess brilliant talents, but who was as yet only known as the deepest gambler in the kingdom; and Henry, who had admitted the count to a great degree of intimacy, persuaded him to resign her to the Prince de Condé, because, knowing him to be poor and believing him to be weak, he fancied he would bear his attentions to his wife with less impatience than he could expect from the count, who was notoriously very wealthy and very fiery. But in this base expectation he was deceived. Condé, though not possessed of much general penetration, could see and admire the unrivalled charms of his bride as well as the king, and, as soon as he perceived Henry's object, he withdrew her from the Court, at first retiring with her to different estates belonging to her father. Passion made Henry young again, and he pursued

them into the country, appearing in various disguises under the lady's window, and seeking to corrupt her attendants. When Condé openly remonstrated with him on the dishonour which he was trying to inflict on him, his nearest relation, the first prince of the blood in the kingdom after the dauphin and his brothers, Henry had the ineffable meanness to deprive him of the pensions payable to him out of the Treasury, which formed the chief part of his income; and the audacity (even in a king such conduct can deserve no other name) to send Sully to threaten him with banishment or imprisonment if he did not at once bring the princess to Paris. The prince acted with becoming firmness and promptitude; taking the princess on a pillion behind him, he mounted his horse, fled by night across the Flemish frontier, and took refuge at Brussels, where, in obedience to express orders from Madrid, the Viceroy, the Archduke Albert, granted them an asylum. Henry threatened an invasion of Flanders if they were not given up, and, under the pretext of a design to assist the daughters of the late Duke of Cleves in retaining his territories in opposition to a claim which Christian, the Elector of Saxony, had advanced to them, began to collect an army.

Conduct such as this gave the Concinis a handle for inflaming their mistress against him more vehemently than ever, insinuating to her, what may perhaps have been not entirely without foundation, that Henry was thinking, if he could obtain his object by no other means, of procuring a double divorce for himself and the princess, and then raising the latter to the throne in her stead. Henry's scandalous passion became, in its not very remote results,

the ruin of every one concerned except the Condés: it entangled the queen more deeply in her connexion with the Concinis, and thus involved her in the infamy which subsequently covered their names; it led to their miserable death; and, more immediately, it led to the assassination of Henry. Marie's reproaches of his inconstancy were now more unsparing than ever; and, as he was resolved to continue his efforts to possess himself of the princess, he rejected all negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the dispute relating to the succession of Cleves, making that a pretext for putting himself at the head of his army, and demanding of the viceroy a passage through his territories. 30,000 men, 5000 cavalry, and a splendid train of artillery, were all to be put in motion to deprive a prince of his own family* of his wife. But, as he was about to pass from his own kingdom into another territory, to pacify the queen, to whom the real object of his enterprise could be no secret, he consented to appoint her regent during his absence, though he took care to give her a council which should prevent any interference of the Concinis; and, though very unwillingly, he also consented that her coronation should be performed. She laid particular stress on his concession of this point, believing that, on the one hand, the publicity and solemnity of the ceremony would render it impossible for him to divorce her afterwards, if he lived and obtained possession of the princess; and, on the other

* According to his own frequent boast the prince really stood in a still nearer relationship to him than that which was recognised by the heralds, for his mother, who, as we have seen, was suspected of having poisoned her husband, had certainly been Henry's mistress; and he had been used to boast to Madame de Verneuil that the present prince was his son.

hand, that, if he died, it would greatly strengthen her authority as regent for her son; and being as well acquainted with the predictions of the astrologers as he was himself, she had a firm conviction that in some way or other the end of his life was approaching. The day of the coronation was fixed for the 13th of May, 1610. As it drew near, the prophecy of evil, arising from a public solemnity and a journey in a carriage, recurred so frequently and vividly to his mind, and his fears of assassination became so uncontrollable, that Sully, who was hardly less superstitious than himself, advised him to join his army before the ceremony, and to allow it to take place without him, or else to postpone it altogether; and to take care not to enter a carriage for some time.

That, however, Henry would not do. Perhaps he was ashamed; perhaps he thought it impolitic to make his apprehensions publicly known. Accordingly, on the appointed day, the queen was solemnly crowned by the Cardinal Joyeuse at St. Denis, in the presence of Henry, his Court, and the principal nobles of the realm; and on the 16th, which was Sunday, she was to make her public entry into Paris. Sully, however, was absent from St. Denis, being laid up with an old wound, which from time to time caused him severe suffering; and on the 14th, in the afternoon, the king, somewhat reassured by the ceremony of the previous day having passed off safely, set out for Paris to pay him a visit at the Arsenal, where he lived, and to make his final arrangements with him for the impending campaign. Seven of his chief officers of state and marshals were in the carriage with him; and pages and running footmen surrounded it on every side. In one of the narrow

streets a couple of carts blocked up the way. The footmen ran forward to clear away the obstacle; and at that moment, a man advanced hastily from among the crowd, sprang on one of the hinder wheels of the carriage, and plunged a knife into the king's shoulder. Crying out, "I am wounded," Henry raised his arm. The assassin repeated his blow, which this time pierced the heart; and without uttering a word, the king sank down dead in the bottom of the carriage.

Thus, suddenly, though, as we have seen, not unexpectedly, perished a sovereign whom not only his own countrymen, but other nations also, have agreed in admiring and extolling with a rare unanimity. His wise and faithful minister, who felt for his master a personal attachment which was honestly returned, and is equally creditable to both; gave him, in his memoirs, the surname of "The Great," and the fitness of the title has been so generally acquiesced in that it is impossible to conclude the history of his reign without examining how far, and by what qualities of mind and body, by what talents and virtues, and by what services to his country, he deserved it.

In estimating the merits or demerits of kings, it seems natural to look at them solely as kings; solely, that is, in their public character. And for no one is this custom more fortunate than for Henry IV., since, if we were to take his private character also into calculation, there are very few sovereigns more deserving of general reprobation. Even after all possible allowance is made for the temptations of monarchs, he must be pronounced without excuse. Compared with his open and varied profligacy, his grandson Louis was decorous, his grandson Charles pure; while neither Louis nor Charles, nor any

debauchee since the days of the Roman emperors, ever sought success in their gallantries by acts of such flagrant tyranny as the Duke de Bellegarde and the Prince de Condé both experienced from Henry. It is happy for us that we may rather turn from this distasteful side of the picture to contemplate him as king; and on this, his public character, we shall find but little occasion to differ from the general verdict of history. Perhaps no occasion, except with respect to his military talents, which, however highly they have been estimated by one or two over-partial writers, were clearly not of the first class. His whole military career shows that to the praise of any high strategic or tactical science he had no claim whatever. Of the generals to whom he was at various times opposed, he was clearly inferior, not only to the great Duke of Parma, but to Fuentes, and at times to Mayenne. And of his own generals, if Biron boasted that his exploits surpassed those of the king, he said no more than the whole army would have corroborated, or than his own exploits at Amiens and elsewhere justified. In looking at his military merits, when we have given him credit for having been a perfectly fearless soldier, a gallant and enterprising cavalry officer, our praise must end.

It is rather as a statesman, and still more as a ruler of men, that he fairly justifies those who still call him the great Henry. And in these two points of view it is hardly possible to overrate his merits. In them he was, in every sense of the word, a magnanimous prince. Large-minded in his views of general policy; sagacious in his choice of the measures by which he proposed to carry them out; penetrating in his judgment of other men, both of those on whose assistance

or service he relied, and of those whose opposition he had to encounter. Moreover, he had deeply implanted in his inmost heart that one quality without which no shrewdness of the statesman, no power of the monarch can permanently benefit either his own reputation or the country which he governs. At all times, in every act and passage of his public life, he was animated with a sincere unchanging patriotism. And from that best of feelings sprang that part of his policy which has been his chief passport to the affection with which his countrymen still revere his memory, and which those who now occupy his throne are still seeking to carry out. It was that which taught him what none of the former kings of France had ever perceived, how high a station in the European Commonwealth belonged to France. It was that which led him to set before his country, as the one aim of his foreign policy the suppression of the House of Austria in the preponderance which it had hitherto exercised in Europe and the establishment of her own influence in its place. Some of the details of the plan by which he proposed to bring about this great revolution may have been visionary and impracticable, as that certainly was which proposed to form the different kingdoms and states of Europe into one great Christian federation, bound to live in perpetual peace with each other, acknowledging the King of France, the eldest son of the Church, as its head. But how completely consistent was his general view of French policy with the feelings of his countrymen (such consistency being in itself one great wisdom in a statesman), may be seen in the steadiness with which it has been pursued ever since his time, being prosecuted at this moment, above two centuries after his death, with greater energy and perseverance than ever. And how

little it was beyond the power of his country (this too being a point which severely tests a ruler's wisdom), is testified with equal clearness by the success with which it has been carried out since his time. Within a quarter of a century of his death France had become what he first pointed out that she might become, the leading power in Europe; and, after all the revolutions and changes that have since taken place in Europe, the extinction of old authorities, the rise of new empires, the civilization and growth of new worlds, she is still indisputably the first of the Continental nations, the most powerful for good or evil; the one on whose decision the peace of the world depends. Nor among his talents must we wholly overlook his diligent application to business and quick comprehension, even in matters most foreign to his early education, and his faculty of organization. Sully has recorded not only the regularity of his attendance at the Council, and the almost intuitive rapidity with which he seized the chief points of every matter submitted to him; but also the originality of mind and fertility of resource displayed by him, so that many of the measures which were generally attributed to the minister in reality proceeded from the king; while his talent for organization is sufficiently evinced by the fact to which we have already alluded, that he was the first sovereign in Europe to set the example of that arrangement of a ministry which now prevails universally, assigning to each member of it his separate department. The general adoption and long existence of such an arrangement which leads us of modern times to look upon it as a matter of course should not be allowed (as in similar cases it too often is) to rob its originator of the credit of introducing a system which educed order out of confusion, and

infused vitality and energy into every branch of the Government, and thus greatly increased the power of the nation itself.

His virtues too were those most becoming to a sovereign, and most especially useful to one coming to the throne under circumstances of such unparalleled difficulty; and they are the more admirable in Henry because they were not the virtues of his age or country. I speak of his humanity to all; his clemency and generosity to his enemies; and his resolute adoption of the previously unheard of principle of religious toleration. His humanity was displayed even to the great injury of his interests, when at the siege of Paris he suffered the besieged to diminish the numbers whom they had to feed by sending away those incapable of aiding in the toils of the defence. His generosity showed itself in all his dealings with those arrayed against him, both while they were so, and after they had ceased to be so. While they were in arms against him he was always ready to be reconciled to them, to treat with them, to listen to their demands, to forgive them; and when the reconciliation had taken place, no recollection of the past animosity rankled in his mind for a moment. He received them into his confidence as fully as if they had always been loyal and faithful; and he had his reward in the steadiness of their subsequent obedience. His adoption and enforcement of religious toleration was even something more than the introduction of a new principle, it was the reversal of an old one which had been previously held as an article of faith by men of every form of religion, and in every country, by the gentle Cranmer as well as by the fierce Calvin or the pitiless Philip; and it was enforced in favour of a sect to which it would not have been inconsistent with

human infirmity if the very circumstance of his having deserted it had made him more hostile. It is no disparagement of these virtues to say that in his circumstances they were politic. The best policy no doubt they always are, and he was far too shrewd not to be aware that for him they were eminently so; but, though it is true that it was for his interest to practise them, it is no less true that none but a good-hearted, magnanimous prince would have been capable of such a course. Kindness and humanity can only be uniformly and consistently exercised when they are prompted by the natural disposition. When they proceed from calculation they are capricious in their demonstrations, uncertain in their continuance. In Henry they were so habitual as to make it clear that they were a part of his very nature, and they seem doubly amiable when united with the indomitable courage and fortitude with which he himself encountered danger. His vices, flagrant as they were, were the vices of his time and country. His virtues were his own.

It is not always that men in estimating the characters of others are sufficiently charitable to fix their eyes almost entirely on their good points, and to shut them against their errors. In the few instances in which they have done so they have still more rarely had so good an excuse as is afforded by Henry, who, if his utter disregard of all moral obligations, of even all decency in the indulgence of his vices, forbid us to term him a good man, is nevertheless by his dauntless courage and fortitude, his princely humanity, his large-minded wisdom, his unswerving patriotism, and the vast benefit his country derived from these his talents and public virtues, well entitled to the praise of a good and a great king.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is no solid reason for believing that the assassination of Henry was the work of any but a single fanatic; but at first the suspicions of almost every one pointed, if not to the queen herself, at all events to the Italian and Spanish party in the Court, with which she had of late identified herself, as the instigator of the deed. Even Sully himself was for a time persuaded to adopt them. On first hearing of the misfortune which had befallen the country and himself (for to him Henry had never wavered in his attachment), he mounted his horse, and at the head of a considerable body of armed retainers, proceeded towards the palace to offer his service to the widowed queen and her son, now King of France; but on his way he received so many warnings of personal danger, that he returned to the Bastille, not daring to trust himself in the queen's power; though, after an interchange of messages, he felt more assured, and repaired to the Louvre, where he was graciously received by Marie, and presented to the young king as the most attached and trusty of his father's servants. And the trial of the culprit, which took place in the course of the week, seemed to establish the truth of his dying assertion, that he had neither prompter nor accomplice. His name was Francis Ravaillac: he had been a petty lawyer, and afterwards a schoolmaster in Angoulême; and his

own account of the motives which had impelled him to his foul crime was that, learning that Henry was preparing to make war on Spain, the country which he regarded as the main support of true religion and of the Catholic Church, he thought it his duty to prevent so wicked a war, even at the cost of his own life. Amid all the tortures to which he was subjected during his examination, and the still more horrible agonies of his execution, studiously protracted while pieces of flesh were torn by hot pincers from his limbs, and boiling oil and molten lead poured into his gaping wounds, he never varied in his declaration that it was he alone who had planned the deed. Yet it cannot be denied that if Marie de Medici had been privy to it, her conduct and that of her chief friends could hardly have been different from what it really was. Among the attendants who were with Henry in the carriage at the moment of his death was the Duke d'Epernon,* who concealed the extent of the injury till he had returned to the palace. Having returned to the Louvre, he at once repaired to the queen's presence, and with her, Sillery, Villeroi, and Jeannin proceeded to concert measures for securing her the undivided authority as regent, the new king being not yet nine years old. Marie de Medici did not lose her presence of mind for a moment. It was hardly natural that she should have regarded with

* It was owing to the promptitude with which the duke took measures to have the assassin secured that he was not instantly massacred by Henry's other attendants, in itself a sufficient proof that he was guilty of no complicity in the crime; since, had he been privy to it, nothing could have been so desirable for him as the withdrawal of Ravaillac from trial by his instant death; yet he was the chief of the Spanish party in the Court, and, as such, was so much distrusted by Henry that he had avoided appointing him one of the Council of Regency.

any great attachment, a husband whose conduct towards her had been such as Henry's; and conjugal affection was not at that time considered such a virtue in France that it was necessary to feign it where it was not felt. She was herself ambitious; and she was under the guidance and dominion of those who were still more so. Therefore, without for a moment giving way to grief, or even yielding to the agitation which the awful suddenness of the event which had made her a widow might have been expected to cause, she at once calmly and resolutely countenanced and adopted the measures suggested by her advisers for the establishment of her authority. It was an emergency requiring ready decision and prompt action; for no existing law nor recognised uniformity of precedent prescribed what was to be done. It was manifest that the regency which Henry had appointed had only been intended to exert a temporary and merely formal power; nor was there any body in the State which had a clear authority to supply what was wanting, or to appoint a regent; but where none had any real right to act, none had so plausible a plea for claiming a right as the Parliament of Paris, which was at that moment sitting, and employed in the decision of some civil law-suits; and the queen's advisers determined at once to recognise its authority, and to ensure that it should be exerted in the manner which they approved. M. Harlay, who, being ill, had thought his attendance unnecessary, while it was acting as a mere law-suit, hastened to assume his proper position as President. M. Servin, the Advocate-General, addressed a speech to the members, requiring them instantly to provide for the government of the king-

dom, and giving his legal opinion that the regency, by law, belonged to the queen; and, to remove any hesitation that might lurk in the mind of any one, the Duke d'Epernon entered the assembly with his sword in his hand, and proclaimed that, though as yet it was sheathed, he was prepared to draw it if an edict conferring the undivided regency on her Majesty were not instantly passed. He was seconded by the Duke de Guise and others, though no one else ventured on such open threats. The edict was passed; and, to fill up any deficiency in the authority of the Parliament, which might be held to vitiate the proceedings, a Bed of Justice, as it was called, was held the next morning, at which the young king presided in person, and where, in the presence of those princes of the blood royal who were in Paris, and of all the cardinals, dukes, peers of France, and the great officers of the Crown, who could be collected at such short notice, the Chancellor de Sillery declared in his name that he appointed the queen, his mother, regent of France, to exercise the undivided authority of Government during his own minority.

At first it seemed that the queen was inclined to use her power, which was in effect completely absolute, with prudence and moderation. She retained her husband's ministers, and, with the exception of his warlike projects, which, of course, fell to the ground at his death, she showed a disposition to adopt his policy, especially in the internal affairs of the kingdom, maintaining the principles of religious toleration towards the Huguenots, lightening the taxes, and conducting herself with affability to all classes. But the Italians whom she had brought with her, Concini and his wife, had already acquired a fatal dominion

over her; and it soon became known that, besides the ostensible ministry, she had a secret council, to which they were both admitted, and where, in fact, everything was regulated according to their views. They were both clever, with the especial talent of fluency of speech and plausibility of argument; ambitious and grasping; prudent, too, or at least crafty, till their mistress's favour turned their heads, and tempted them to a display of arrogance towards the highest nobles, and even princes of the land, which eventually led to their destruction. A few weeks after Henry's death, Sully, seeing that Concini was all powerful in the queen's councils, and desiring to guide his influence into the course most useful to the State, sent a message to him, offering him the aid of his own long experience; but the favourite replied that he and his wife required countenance or assistance from no subject, and that Sully had more need of them than they of him.* In fact, they bore that great minister a grudge for not having been earlier in paying his court to them; and in a few months they procured his dismissal from the control of the finances and the government of the Bastille. He had foreseen his fall some weeks before, when the queen announced her resolution to depart entirely from the policy of the late reign with respect to Spain; and, young as her children were, to propose a double marriage between Louis and his sister the Princess Elizabeth, and the Prince and Infanta of Spain. Her ostensible object in such an alliance was the preservation of peace; but it is probable that her more real one was to produce a change in the policy of Spain, and to render that country

* Sully, Mém. liv. xxviii.

desirous to maintain her son's and her own authority, instead of subverting it. For the first motion of the Spanish Court, on hearing of Henry's death, had been to dispute the legality of that monarch's divorce from Margaret, and, consequently, the legitimacy of the young Louis; and on these grounds De Fuentes had urged Condé, as the first prince of the blood, to claim the throne, and had promised him every assistance from Spain to make good his rights; but it was obvious that a marriage such as she now proposed would change Philip's disposition. And, in truth, it soon appeared that there was no such weight of character or ability in Condé as could make him a formidable antagonist. He was not altogether without ambition, but he was unstable, and, being very poor, still more eager for money than for power. Had Marie's friends been less prompt in their measures, or had he been in Paris at the time of the king's murder, he might have advanced formidable pretensions to the regency. He had still plausible claims to the office of Lieutenant-General; and the different parties among the malcontent nobles whom the arrogance of the Concinis more than once in the next three or four years drove into rebellion, sought to make use of his name to disquiet or displace the Government. But no one could rely on him; the queen, who lavished the treasure of the kingdom with boundless prodigality on her favourites, enabling Concini to purchase for vast sums titles, places about the Government, and important and valuable governments, was equally ready to expend them in buying off enemies; and Condé was willing to be quiet for a time, and permanently rich. When such was the chief of the princes, and such the weapons of warfare on

both sides, it may easily be supposed that the whole Court was again one scene of intrigue and corruption. Even Henry's old ministers began to plot against one another; the rest at first conspiring against Sully, whose real honesty, combined with an austerity of manners and of morals very unusual in that age, was a standing reproach to them; and when he had been got rid of, Sillery began to plot against Jeannin and Villeroi, hoping when they, too, had been driven from office, and he alone remained of the former Government, that his official experience would make him necessary to his new master. He was deceived every way. His colleagues proved too strong for him, and kept their places while he was dismissed. But neither of them had any power; all was vested in Concini, who was made Marquis d'Ancre, then Governor of Amiens, and Marshal of France, though utterly devoid of all military experience; and whose ambition at last rose so high, that he actually demanded the daughter of the Count de Soissons, the second prince of the blood, in marriage for his son, extorting a consent to so unequal a match from the queen herself, though subsequently she revoked it, and compelled him to renounce the project.

One party, and one alone, the Huguenots, profited by the queen's resolution to maintain the Concinis in the position to which she had raised them. Not that queen or favourite had any liking for them, but because Marie, seeing how generally the nobles of the kingdom were offended at her preference of a foreigner, was careful not to give the Huguenot chiefs, who were still a large, and at all times a most powerful body, any additional grounds of discontent; being the more careful on the subject because she knew that the

avowal of her intention to promote the Spanish marriages had already awakened their suspicions, and prepared them to watch, if not to misinterpret her actions. With these views, when in the autumn the young king was crowned at Rheims, she published an edict, confirming the Protestants in all the privileges granted to them at Nantes; she authorised their holding their triennial meetings at Chatelherault; and when, at the beginning of 1611, the Duke of Savoy was preparing to attack Geneva, a place which he had long wished to annex to his own dominions, she ordered Lesdiguiéres, as Governor of Dauphiné, to provide for its safety; and sent formal notice to the duke that she should consider any act of hostility against that town, or the Pays de Vaud, as a declaration of war against France.

But her object in these occasional displays of a conciliatory policy was generally seen through, and neither they nor her liberal bribes to those among the nobles whom she thought worth purchasing, could permanently attach men who had no motive for any line of conduct but that of self-interest, or bind them to her for a single moment after they thought that a change in the state of affairs might prove more profitable to them; and even the death of the Count de Soissons, which took place in the winter of 1612, proved unfavorable to her, by uniting the opposition to the Concinis under one head. Soissons was an abler man than his nephew, the Prince de Condé, and, though the prince was in reality the head of the family, his uncle's greater experience and more vigorous character gave him a certain degree of ascendancy, which tended to divide the party; but on his death, all united under the lead of Condé, and he,

though a Catholic, began to show an inclination to espouse the interests of the Huguenots, who, on their part, were inclined to place confidence in him from a recollection that his family had generally been of their religion, and a belief that he also was secretly inclined towards it. But he overrated his power, or rather he was too incapable of persevering long in any one system of policy, to have any beyond that of causing annoyance and some embarrassment to those whom he was thwarting at the moment. He announced his disapproval of the intended Spanish marriage. By some means, which may be guessed at but can hardly be described with certainty, the queen again won him over, and used him as a tool to diminish the influence of the Duke d'Epernon and the Duke de Guise. She had good reason to dread them, since Guise's brother, known as the Chevalier de Guise, murdered the Baron de Luy, whose chief crime was being known to be in her confidence, in open day in the streets of Paris; and the whole family showed a disposition to bring back the scenes of outrage which had desolated Paris for twenty years before. Yet a few weeks later, being disgusted or alarmed at the price which Condé put upon his services, she threw him off, restored Guise and Epernon to her confidence, and sought to use them against him. At last, after they had quarrelled and been reconciled many times, Condé listened to the advice of the Duke de Bouillon, who, though none of his Huguenot brethren had received so much of Marie's favour as himself, was always inclined to think no favour equal to his deserts, quitted the Court, and, supported by the Duke de Nevers, the Duke de Mayenne, and other princes, among whom was the young Duke de Vendôme, the

eldest son of Henry and Gabrielle, openly raised the standard of war. The Court was now in the highest state of perplexity. It had an army, but no general, for Epernon was absent, and besides him there was no one on the queen's side fit to be employed in that capacity but the Duke de Guise, whom Concini, from some private jealousy or ill-will, would not allow to be entrusted with the command; so that the confederate nobles made themselves master of town after town without meeting any resistance. Laon, La Fére, Mezieres, fell into their hands; and as, instead of fighting, the Court made known its willingness to negotiate, from the last-mentioned city Condé issued a manifesto, in the form of a letter to the queen, in which he enumerated in general terms the real and fancied grievances that had driven him and his friends to take up arms; and demanded, besides the redress of these evils, a postponement of the Spanish marriages, and an immediate convocation of the States General.

The queen, and her advisers the Concinis, had no objection to encounter him on paper. She, too, issued a manifesto, in equally general terms, denying the truth of the accusations he had brought against her Government; and at the same time she sent an envoy in whom she knew that he had confidence, M. de Thou, to treat with him in private. She soon had stronger arguments in her power; for, while the negotiations were going on, an army of 6000 men, which had been raised for her in Switzerland, reached Paris, a force which, when combined with the troops already there, Condé and his friends could not have withstood; but this display of power only made her weakness more conspicuous, when it was seen that she was

afraid to use it; and in May, 1614, a treaty between her and him was signed at St. Menehould, a town in Champagne, by which she granted nearly all that he had demanded; undertaking at once to convoke the States General, with a view to the reform of the abuses he had complained of; promising to defer all further steps for the conclusion of the Spanish marriages till the opinion of the States had been taken upon them; leaving in his hands and those of others of the confederate nobles several of the strongholds of which they had possessed themselves; and promising them further enormous sums of money, the grant made to Condé himself amounting to not less than 150,000 crowns.

A treaty such as this, which was in fact entire submission to rebellion, was of course only an encouragement to repeat it; and accordingly, the very moment that the queen had performed her part of the bargain, which she did with great despatch, Condé again took up arms, professedly to chastise the citizens of Poitiers for electing a mayor who did not belong to his party, and for expelling some of his adherents from that town. But he found that he had presumed too far on the weakness of the Government, or rather, by driving it to despair, he had also compelled it to energy. Roused by this renewal of insult to the royal authority, Marie now at last listened to the advice of Villeroi, who from the first had counselled firmness and resistance, and prepared to chastise it by force of arms. An army of 5000 men was instantly marched into Poitou; and, as she still feared to trust Guise with too much military power, she accompanied it herself with the young king, and, making him show himself on horseback at the head of the troops in the towns through which they passed, she rendered him

very popular, and inspired that district with a feeling of confidence in the Government; while at the same time she disarmed her enemies without striking a blow. Against an army with the king in person at its head, Condé dared do nothing: his forces melted away. The very towns which, by the treaty of St. Menehould, he had been allowed to retain, deserted him and opened their gates to the royal train. From all quarters the chief nobles flocked in to offer their homage to their sovereign, and Louis, having presided at the opening of the States of Brittany, returned to Paris in the middle of September, after a journey which had been more like a peaceful progress than a warlike operation, and which yet had completely extinguished what, if timorously dealt with, might have proved a formidable rebellion. Without making any formal submission, Condé yielded to necessity, and after a short interval followed the king to Paris, to be present at the opening of the States General, which, wherever he was able to influence the elections, he had taken great pains to fill with his own partisans.

It had been originally settled that they should meet in August, but his own movements in Poitou had compelled the postponement of their assemblage till October; and now one other ceremony had to be performed first. Louis had been born on the 27th of September, 1601, and the law fixed the majority of a king at the completion of his thirteenth year. Accordingly, in the first week of October, 1614, he formally registered a renewal of the oath which he had taken at his coronation four years before, confirming the Edict of Nantes, promising to maintain the laws, and adding a further engagement to make new ones

according to the information and advice which he should receive at the approaching meeting of the States General. For though that body could tender advice, and complain of grievances, it was an admitted principle that the whole legislative power rested in the king alone. A few days later he held a second Bed of Justice, at which the queen formally announced his attainment of his majority, and her own consequent resignation of the regency; and he thanked her for her care of him, and entreated her to continue to exercise the authority of Government, as she had hitherto done.

A few days afterwards Louis formally opened the States General; but the short delay that had taken place had cooled men's expectations of any good that was to be derived from them. The Court had always intended to render their proceedings as much of a nullity as possible; and lately, Condé, the urgency of whose demands had been the chief cause of their being convoked, had been so disappointed at the result of the elections, that he made the queen an offer to release her from her promise of convoking them: and this second view of what was to be expected from their assemblage proved more correct than the first, for it was attended with no practical result whatever. A peculiar interest attaches to this convocation of the body, inasmuch as it was the last occasion of its meeting before the great Revolution; and those who were chiefly instrumental in inducing Louis XVI. to revive it, proposed to themselves this meeting as their model, and endeavoured to reproduce it in its main features as far as they could be ascertained. Yet, it is remarkable, especially if the scantiness of our information respecting it be compared

with the fulness of our own records concerning our Parliaments of the same date, that neither the political antiquarians of 1789, nor subsequent historians, have been able to ascertain either what was its composition, what its method of procedure, or even what were the constitutional limits of its authority. We do not even know who the electors were, nor who were qualified to be elected. And the little that on these points is certain would lead us rather to conjecture that there were no settled laws by which these matters, all-important as they practically were, were regulated. The deputies represented three classes: the clergy, the nobility, and the commons, or the Tiers Etat; the representatives of the former being nearly equal in number, 140 for the clergy, 132 for the nobles; but those of the last class being more numerous, and amounting to 192. But, when we examine the returns from the different provinces, we cannot reconcile the numbers, and much less the proportions, with any conceivable rule or principle. Dauphiné returned no more than 11 members, Provence only 16, but Burgundy sent 39. Again, in Provence the nobles equalled the representatives of both the other classes put together; in Burgundy the commons outnumbered the clergy and nobles in almost the same proportion. There was another striking contrast: among the representatives of the clergy nearly half were chief dignitaries of the Church, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals; but the nobles sent scarcely a single great lord,* and the representatives of the commons were equal to theirs in official position and generally in birth, being commonly the

* Sismondi, p. viii. c. 12.

younger brothers of noble families, and being also nearly all employed in the administration of justice, or in departments connected with the finance of the kingdom, a position which must have placed them to a great extent under the influence of the Crown. It should be added that the University of Paris advanced a claim to be specially represented, but could only obtain leave to draw up a *cahier*, or statement of grievances, such as the different committees, into which the whole assembly was divided for the purpose of work, were also to frame. Since it is certain, as has been pointed out before, that the States had no legislative authority, the whole of their power seems to have been limited to that of remonstrating against abuses and praying the king for their redress, in much the same manner as the convocation among ourselves is allowed to proceed at this moment; and it was hardly conceivable that any practical result of importance could ensue from the deliberations of an assembly whose functions were so restricted. But, even had they been as little limited as those of the English Parliament, before they could bear any permanently useful fruit there must have been a certain agreement between the three orders as to their objects, and a certain unity of action in the pursuit of them. But, instead of this, the thing first and, throughout the whole proceedings, most visible, was the jealousy that each order entertained of the other. The nobles disdained the commons; the commons, though humble in their language to the nobles, were secretly indignant at their arrogance, and not less at the grasping character which was betrayed in many of their propositions; and both were suspicious of the clergy. A dispassionate observer of the present day can perceive

that all these jealousies were justified, since each class sought only its personal interests, and not one took a large or impartial view of those of the State, or carried its aims beyond the present moment. The clergy demanded the publication and uniform observance of the decrees of the Council of Trent, thinking that this would involve the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and would compel the king to fulfil his coronation oath by a real extermination of heresy. The other orders, from different motives, resisted such an establishment of the authority of Rome in the kingdom; and, pointing out the immorality and grasping character of all ranks of the clergy, bade them rather reform their lives and renounce their pluralities; and though, before the close of the sittings, the nobles, being offended at the attacks made on them by the commons, withdrew their opposition, the commons maintained theirs successfully to the end; and, following in this the lead of the university, recommended the assertion, as a fundamental law of the constitution, of the doctrine that, "as the king held his crown from God alone, no power on earth, either spiritual or temporal, had any rights over his kingdom; nor could attack his person, nor absolve his subjects from their fidelity to him." This proposition again, as being aimed at the papal pretensions, and as containing a plain allusion to the murders of the last two kings, both of which were attributed to the Jesuits, the clergy resisted with all their might, denouncing it as an introduction into France of the English oath of abjuration. They reasserted the supremacy of the Church over the State in the fullest manner, and threatened to retire and place the whole kingdom under an interdict if the proposition were persisted in. The commons com-

plained also of the number and amount of the pensions chargeable on the revenue, and demanded a diminution of them as indispensable to a reduction of taxes, which they also represented as indispensable. But the nobles, who were more open than either clergy or commons in the pursuit of objects purely and undeniably selfish, positively refused to join in this demand. The pensions were chiefly enjoyed by members of their own order; from the *taille*,* the most vexatious of the taxes, they were exempt; and instead of desiring the relief of the people in general from any tax, they claimed a further exemption for themselves from the *gabelle* or tax upon salt. In this demand the clergy joined them, as also in a petition for the abolition of the custom by which public offices were sold; and of the Paulette, which, as the price of the hereditary tenure of such, must have fallen with the custom of selling them at all. But such an abolition would have been looked on by the commons as a personal injury, since they were the principal purchasers of such offices; and the only measure in which the three orders were willing to unite was a demand for an enquiry into the conduct of the different officers connected in any way with the revenue and finance of the kingdom. An outcry against this class of public functionaries has been common under every corrupt government, and, in the case of those now designated as objects of attack, their general character for wealth was presumed to be a proof of their dishonesty.

The general want of unanimity in these petitions enabled the Court to avoid compliance with any of

* See note at the beginning of Chap. VII.

them. Towards the end of the year the ministers invited a deputation from each of the three orders to a conference, and gave them, as a reply from the king to such of their remonstrances as had as yet been presented, answers which, when they were not direct refusals, were evasions, which every one saw to be tantamount to refusals; and the only concession of which they held out any hope was that of the abolition of the Paulette, the measure which, of all others, the commons viewed with the greatest repugnance. That, indeed, was granted, and was made the pretext for an increase of the tax upon salt; but the next year the Paulette was reimposed, though only for a limited period of nine years, which might be, and in fact was, renewed from time to time when about to expire. The ministers even asserted, as a fundamental principle of the Constitution, a doctrine which was evidently designed to prevent any repetition of the remonstrances against taxes, declaring that the condition of the revenue was a State secret, and that the king was under no obligation to make known to the people either his resources or his embarrassments;* and, though they promised to send to the President of each Chamber a financial statement, they explained that it would be done as an act of grace, and not as the admission of a right, and forbade them to insert the document among the records of their proceedings. They had good reason for wishing it not to be preserved, since, though it was probably drawn up by Jeannin himself, Sismondi does not hesitate to pronounce it false in all its most important details, and framed with no other intention than that

* Sismondi.

of deceiving the representatives of the people to whom it was submitted. Before the dissolution of the Assembly two more demands were made by the commons, to neither of which could they obtain the assent of the other orders, though one seems indispensable to the security and permanence of any Government, and the other does them especial credit as indicating a more correct appreciation of what was requisite for the security of the people in general than had as yet obtained even among ourselves. They desired to have enrolled among the fundamental laws of the monarchy one declaring every levying of war, or league for the purpose of levying of war, or any raising of a common fund for such a purpose, in itself an act of high treason against the sovereign; and another, providing for the convocation of the States General every tenth year. Without such a law monarchy, however limited in name, is in fact despotism; yet three-quarters of a century had still to elapse before the English Parliaments extorted the admission of the principle from its sovereign; and though it is true that, without the power of the purse, which among ourselves had been previously secured, but which, as we have seen, was formally denied to the French States, the right of meeting was but a dead letter, it is hard to conceive that the establishment of the latter on a firm basis would not eventually have brought about the concession of the former. But these demands, like those which had preceded them, were either rejected or suffered to fall to the ground; and at the end of February the States were dissolved.

Of any direct practical result their meeting had been wholly barren; but it had indirectly borne one fruit which had a great influence on the future

fortunes of the nation, bringing into notice the commanding genius of one man who was destined to govern it for a longer period and with a more absolute authority than had yet been witnessed in Europe, and to leave behind him so great a renown, and an influence so enduring, that for many generations succeeding ministers laboured only to follow in his steps, and thought it a sufficient justification of any measure that it was dictated by his example. The sittings and conferences had been distinguished by many brilliant displays of eloquence, especially among the representatives of the commons, the most impassioned orator of their body being their President, Miron, who, as Prêvot des Marchands de Paris, filled the same office as Etienne Marcel had occupied, when under his guidance the States extorted a great increase of power from the necessities of John. Miron's eloquence, which had not been unmixed with threats, limited itself to generalities, and proposed no specific measures of relief for any class; but, at the closing meeting, when each order deputed one of their own body to act as their spokesman, in presenting their final memorial of grievances to the king in person, the chosen representative of the clergy was the young Bishop of Luçon, Armand Jean Duplessis Richelieu. He was now twenty-nine years of age, the youngest son of a gentleman of ancient family in Poitou. Originally he had been intended for the army; but when his second brother, who occupied the same see of Luçon, retired to a Carthusian convent, his relations, unwilling to have so valuable a preferment lost to the family, obtained a transfer of it to him; and he willingly exchanged his military career for one in which he perhaps perceived that his pecu-

liar talents were more likely to lead him to distinction. He devoted himself for some years to rigorous study, particularly to that of argumentative eloquence; and at the age of twenty-two, wishing to obtain possession of the preferment that was awaiting him, he repaired to Rome, to solicit in person from Paul V. a dispensation from all legal impediments on the score of his youth. It is eminently characteristic of his unscrupulous audacity that he procured the dispensation he sought by representing himself to the Infallible Father as older than he really was; and that, as soon as his investiture was complete, he made confession of the deceit, and requested absolution for it; and it is equally characteristic of his Holiness that he expressed not indignation at the fraud, but admiration of the ingenuity that had so imposed on him, saying that the new bishop was a youth of rare genius, but astute and crafty.* Since that time he had been silently but steadily making his way. He at once became celebrated as a preacher, and even before Henry's death attracted the notice of the queen by a sermon which he delivered in her presence during Lent; and the favour which he won as a divine he secured as a courtier, attaching himself to her party during the life of her husband, and, on the accession of the new king, fully appreciating the overpowering influence of the Concini, and paying his court to them with equal diligence. But it was not as a theologian nor as a preacher, however eminent, that he could expect to rise to the power which was his aim from the first; and therefore, now that the opportunity was afforded him of displaying his talents as a man of business and a statesman, he eagerly availed

* Siri (vol. i. p. 5) "Anecdotes du Cardinal Richelieu, et du règne de Louis XIII."—French translation. Amsterdam, 1717.

himself of it; and the speech which he delivered showed him a man of a very different stamp from those with whom he was associated. Though it lasted an hour and a half, it was so full of matter that it seemed short to his hearers; it dealt but little in generalities, and alleged no grievance for which it did not also propose a remedy. Two measures on which he especially insisted as requisite were remarked upon in subsequent years as having been dictated not so much by a regard for the prosperity of the country, as by a keen perception of his own interest. Turning to the king, he implored him still to leave the queen, his mother, in the enjoyment of the power which, as he said, she had exercised with so much wisdom; and, having thus shown his anxiety for the preservation of her authority, he added a complaint that the king's council contained no member of his own profession, such an exclusion of the ecclesiastical element being, as he argued, both an insult to the Church and a cause of weakness to the Government. Subsequent events showed that he could be quite satisfied with the admission of a single churchman into the ministry, provided that that churchman was himself; but the day for such promotion had not yet arrived, though it was not far distant.

The members of the States General returned to their homes, and their dissolution was the signal for a fresh disturbance. The Parliament of Paris had often tried to establish the maxim that the authority of the States, whatever it was, was one of which the continual existence and exercise was requisite for the safety of the people in general; and that, whenever the States were not assembled, their own body was the inheritor of that authority. And they thought the present moment peculiarly favorable for the assertion

of this principle, while the recollection of the proved impotence of the more dignified assembly was fresh in the mind of every one, and while the one thing which seemed to have met with general approbation, the regency of the queen, might easily be represented as their own work. Accordingly, they prepared to take up the work where the States General had left it off, convoking a special meeting of their most dignified members, and inviting the attendance also of the chief princes and nobles of the realm, and officers of the Crown who did not belong to their number, "to deliberate on proposals tending to the service of the king, the relief of his subjects, and the general welfare of the State." Condé, who, as has been mentioned, had been greatly dissatisfied with the composition of the States General, lent the scheme his countenance. But the Chancellor Sillery, who saw in it only a plan for the overthrow of the ministry, represented it to the king's council as a manifest usurpation. An edict was at once issued to prohibit the intended meeting; and the Parliament was even commanded to cancel the resolution which it had passed, and to erase it from its records. They endeavoured to resist, and ventured to present to the king a memorial of grievances, at the head of which they actually placed the abolition of the Paulette, which was the one measure which had been conceded to the representations of the States General. They were met by a peremptory command to cease from such interference with affairs of state, which, they were reminded, did not belong to them; and Condé received particular notice to desist from attending their meetings. In great anger he retired to his castle of Creil, in Clermont. The Dukes de Longueville, de Bouillon, and Mayenne followed his example, and withdrew to their

governments. But the queen, who was now preparing to solemnize the king's marriage, thought to win him back by inviting him, as chief of the royal blood, to attend the ceremony. He refused. She made every possible advance towards him, using first the intervention of Villeroi, and afterwards that of the Duke de Nevers, whom she knew to be secretly in league with him; but all her efforts for the preservation of peace were vain. He had ascertained that he could rely on the support of the Huguenots, who were about to hold their triennial meeting at Grenoble; and, once more presuming on the weakness of the Court, he issued a manifesto, the chief point in which was a denunciation of the influence and rapacity of the Marshal d'Ancre, but which concluded with a threat of war if all his demands were not granted. Again, however, he found that he had miscalculated the resolution of the queen. She looked on his manifesto as a declaration of war, but did not allow it to delay for a moment the preparations for the king's marriage. On the contrary, she continued her journey to Bordeaux, where a portion of the marriage ceremonies was to be performed; and left the Marshal Boisdauphin, with an army of nearly 12,000 men, to make head against any force which Condé and the other dukes, his confederates, could collect. On the 18th of October the marriages took place; the Duke de Guise, as representative of the Prince of Spain, espousing the Princess Elizabeth at Bordeaux, and the Duke d'Usseda, on the part of King Louis, espousing the Infanta Anna Maria of Austria (as she was commonly called) at Burgos, where, two days before, the princess had executed a formal renunciation of any right to the throne of Spain which might hereafter devolve upon her. The events of the next reign

showed of what small validity such renunciations are, when those who have made them are powerful enough to disavow them; but, at the moment, the arrangement was thought a great stroke of policy on the part of the Spanish minister, and a great proof of moderation in the French Government. The two princesses then went forward to meet their real husbands, whom as yet they had never beheld; and on the 9th of November, they met in a tent erected on an island in the middle of the Bidassoa, and being there exchanged, like prisoners of war, they proceeded each on her way.

There was indeed no reason why the position of Condé should have caused any alteration of the queen's other plans; for, however formidable the list of those nobles who supported him might appear, on paper, it was but a phantom of civil war that he was able to wage, and was not distinguished by a single battle, and hardly by the loss of a single life on either side. There were, indeed, weighty names among his supporters, Sully himself being one, a fact which alone is sufficient to show that his complaints of the existing Government were not destitute of foundation. With Sully came his son-in-law, the Duke de Rohan, a man equally eminent for private virtue and public ability as a soldier and statesman. And De Rohan brought with him the Duke de Candale, the eldest son of the Duke d'Epernon, who, to the deep disgust of his father, had recently joined the Reformed Church. Their influence induced the assembly at Grenoble to declare itself formally in favour of the war, a measure of extreme impolicy, since it was clearly for the interest of the Huguenots as a body to abstain from mixing themselves up with the strife of the two parties, and which now gave their enemies a pretext

for reckoning them among the disaffected, and, as such, retrenching their privileges. But all these adherents did not enable Condé to collect an army sufficient to face that under the command of Boisdauphin. A few slightly fortified towns on the south and west opened their gates to him; but those in the north, which he was particularly anxious to secure, as being depositories of portions of the royal treasury, such as Noyon, Montdidier, and Beauvais, rejected his offers; and, as the greatest force which he at any time had under his orders did not exceed 6000 men, he was wholly without means to reduce them by force. Boisdauphin, who was an aged man, had even less energy than the prince had power. He contented himself with moving his army to and fro to observe his operations, and thus, in the opinion of some of his officers, who were loud in their complaints, distressed his men more by marches and counter-marches than if he had exposed them to the chances of battle. At last the queen got weary of war, which was productive of no results beyond those of giving occasion to the jests and sneers of those who were unfriendly to her government, and of draining the royal treasury; and consequently she began to view with disfavour the ministers who had counselled the adoption of strong measures. Condé, too, became equally discontented with the part he was himself playing, as leader of an army too weak to encounter an enemy. He was endowed with considerable eloquence, and, in his own opinion, also with a talent for business and finance; and, thinking that the best way to secure a favorable reception at Court, which might afford him an opening for the display of those abilities, was to make the first advances, at the beginning of the next year, 1616, he addressed a letter to the queen imploring her to restore

peace to the kingdom. A truce was immediately signed, and conferences, with a view to a formal and entire peace, were opened at Loudun, in Poitou. Certainly, if credit could be said to have been gained by either party in the war, it was not the prince and his adherents who had reaped it. Yet so weak was the queen, that the conditions which she granted them were as favorable as if their campaign had been one uninterrupted triumph. The demands, indeed, which they made in favour of the Huguenots were rejected or evaded; but those which they advanced for their own aggrandisement or enrichment (and they were by far more numerous and more important) were conceded, though to enable the queen to grant them it was necessary to deprive some of her own friends of posts or governments which they were holding. Condé, besides exchanging his government of Guienne, in which he had not one formidable stronghold, for Berri, with the strong castles of Bourges and Chinon, obtained a grant of a million and a half of livres. He was also declared the chief member of the king's council, and as such had authority to affix his signature to all its edicts: a concession which the queen yielded with great reluctance, and only in deference to the advice of Villeroi, who urged upon her that there could be no danger in giving the prince a pen so long as she took care to guide his hand. The Marshal d'Ancre was forced to cede Amiens, that the Duke de Longueville's power in Picardy might be complete. The Duke de Montbazon was made lieutenant-governor of Picardy. Other nobles received large grants of money; the entire sum expended, as a reward apparently for rebellion, being not less than six millions of livres; while the ministers, Sillery, Jeannin, and Villeroi, as the advisers of resistance to

Condé's original demands, were all superseded in their offices, and d'Epernon was compelled to retire from the Court.

While the negotiations were in progress a strange accident occurred, similar to that by which Dunstan, hundreds of years before, had destroyed his enemies at Calne, and which, if Marie had been a princess of sterner character, might have given rise to similar suspicions. The floor of the saloon in the palace at Tours, in which she was giving audience to a numerous court, suddenly gave way, with the exception of a single beam above which she herself, with Sillery and Jeannin, were standing. The Duke de Guise saved himself from the fall by clinging to the sill of the window near which he was standing, but the rest of the company, including d'Epernon himself, Villeroi, and Bassompierre, were precipitated to the ground, and, though no one was killed, many were grievously hurt and crippled. At last, on the 3rd of May, the whole of the conditions were agreed to, the prince and his adherents making no concession beyond that of laying down their arms, and no sacrifice beyond that of the interests of the Huguenots, and the dignity of the Parliament, which was generally looked on as the original cause of this rebellion, and certainly gained no advantage from it. A fortnight afterwards Louis and his young queen made their entry into Paris for the first time since their marriage, and were received with every demonstration of joy by the citizens, who were delighted at the return of peace, and looked upon it as a happy omen for the future tranquillity of his reign, that its re-establishment should thus coincide with their king's entrance into his capital.

CHAPTER VI.

THE dismissal of the old ministers was the forerunner of a total change in the Government. As yet the queen-mother exerted the whole authority in filling up the places rendered vacant. Jeannin was replaced as Minister of Finance by Barbin, the Superintendent of her Household. Villeroi was compelled to sell his post to Mangot, the President of the Parliament of Bordeaux, whose chief claim was founded on his having rendered important service to Concini; while Richelieu, who was on terms of intimacy with Barbin, was made the Almoner of the young queen, and a councillor of state. But, though thus able still to make ministers, the queen's authority and her favourite's influence were tottering to their fall. The king, though not old enough to exert authority himself, was old enough to listen to suggestions against those who did; and, though too weak-minded to form resolutions of his own, he was very obstinate in adhering to those suggestions of others which he had once adopted. Nor was he, though not devoid of natural ability, sufficiently well-informed on any subject to be able now, or even when of more mature age, to distinguish the character of the advice given him. In truth, his education had been greatly neglected; nor did Queen Marie escape the suspicion

of having designedly kept him in a state of childish ignorance, and encouraged in him a taste for frivolous pursuits, in order the longer to maintain her own authority. In the next century the mother of our George III. did not escape a similar imputation; though it is not probable that it was deserved in either case. Mothers are not apt to be hard task-masters, especially of their first-born, and still less if he is heir to a throne: and few, indeed, have been the instances in which a royal family has been so fortunate in that respect as our own; and in which a sovereign, born in the purple, has been blessed with a mother sufficiently clear-sighted to see that to qualify her child by careful education for the discharge of the great office that awaited her, was a solemn duty, not only to the child herself, but to the people whom she was destined to govern; while that sovereign has discerned no better way of showing her gratitude for the parental care which she experienced, than by imitating it in the training of her own family, and taking the same pains to guide aright the feelings, develop the talents, and encourage the judgment of her son, that were formerly so diligently and judiciously bestowed on herself.

Louis's favourite was a gentleman named De Luynes, of no very distinguished family, and exceedingly poor, but skilful in hawking and other sports of the field, and as such recommended to him by his tutor, M. de Souvré, who thought he had no talents to render him dangerous in any other sphere. But, if De Luynes was destitute of ability, he was not without cunning; and if he was not ambitious before, the hold he soon obtained in the king's fancy made him so. He saw the power exercised by Concini, and

might well be pardoned for thinking himself equally able with that supple Italian to advise measures of state, or at least to acquire dignities and wealth for himself. He began to fill the king's ear with stories of the detestation in which Concini and his wife were held, and of the presumption with which they spoke of their own power in the State; and likewise to suggest that Louis himself was now old enough to be entitled to have his voice heard in the Government, if their influence with the queen-mother was not employed to persuade her to stifle it. It is probable that the real cause of their unpopularity was the enormous wealth which they had accumulated; but no stories could exaggerate their insolence, which was displayed equally to all classes, and in every way: by acts of patronage and by deeds of outrage. They sent a message to Condé to tender him their good offices with the queen. And because a sergeant of the municipal guard, a shoemaker named Picard, being stationed at one of the gates of the city, required the marshal to show his passport on entering, he sent two of his servants to cudgel the man for doing his duty. The citizens, enraged at this insult to their whole body, took the law into their own hands, and hung the footmen at Picard's door; and the whole affair, his attempt to set himself above the law, since the soldier had been only discharging his strict duty, his childish anger, and his inability to protect his servants, made him ridiculous as well as odious: and some of the nobles, with the Dukes of Mayenne and de Bouillon at their head, already began to plot his destruction. He perceived his danger, and withdrew for a time to an estate which he had acquired in Normandy; but when, in the course

of the summer, Condé arrived in Paris, and began to exercise his new authority as President of the Council, he also returned, thinking that he had secured the prince's protection by the offers which he had previously made him of his own. He soon found, however, that Condé had no intention of endangering himself to serve him or any one else. But he was saved for the time by the jealousies which the different nobles entertained of each other (for the miserable system of intrigue which governed the Court had made every man distrustful of his fellow), though he was forced to submit to the seizure by the Duke de Longueville of some important fortresses in Picardy of which he was governor, and had been recognised as such by the treaty of Loudun. The queen-mother, however, was still as much under his influence as ever; and, though she had been previously eager for the return of Condé to the Court, the marshal soon found means of reawakening all her suspicions of him, having even an unexpected coadjutor in Sully himself.

On the prince's return to the capital, the feeble populace had suddenly made him its idol, deserting the gates of the Louvre to throng the approaches to his palace; and reports became rife that his popularity had turned his head, and that he was meditating designs of a more deliberate and deeper treason than his previous outbreaks. He studiously made parade of the power of signing the edicts of the Council which the queen had conceded so unwillingly, and used it so as to engross the whole authority of Government. It was to him that all who had any object to gain now began to present their petitions, which he received as if he alone had the power to grant or to

refuse them; and he was heard to boast that a single word of his could draw a thousand swords from their sheath. He was believed to be planning the usurpation of the crown itself. Some of his confidants had introduced at their suppers the toast of Barabbas, which they represented as merely a jesting nickname for Barbin; but which was believed to have a secret meaning, and to indicate the intention of getting rid of the bar* which distinguished Condé's escutcheon from that of the reigning family. Sully himself adopted these suspicions, and thought it his duty to warn the queen-mother, and the king himself, against Condé; and it was resolved to arrest him, and those of the nobles on whose aid he was supposed to reckon. It was not easy to seize him, or any one, except by surprise, as Biron had been taken in the previous reign; for the existing code of honour allowed, and indeed enjoined resistance even to the death to any one who, even as an officer of justice, should lay hands on a gentleman; and the manner in which it was effected shows the paltry and faithless character of the king himself. Since to attempt to seize the prince in his own palace might give rise to a struggle and conflict which might lead to the renewal of another civil war, it was resolved to arrest him in the Louvre; and the business was entrusted to a nobleman whose name had not been previously mixed up in any party struggles, the Marquis de Themines. He undertook it with a few of his own retainers, and some Italians on whom Concini could depend, for whom the necessary weapons were conveyed into the queen-mother's apartments in a chest supposed to be full of

* "Barre à bas," down with the bar.

silks from Italy. Bassompierre and a small band of the most reckless gallants of the Court were induced to swear to stand by her in a project which she entertained, without knowing what that project was. Two regiments of guards were ordered to be under arms; and yet, after all these preparations, so apprehensive was Marie of the result, that she packed up all her plate and jewels, to be ready for instant flight from Paris if her blow should fail; while the commanders of the regiments, for their own security, required express orders for their conduct under the Great Seal. Louis alone felt no misgiving, knowing that the prince would come to the Council at ten o'clock, and would afterwards, according to his usual custom, wait on the queen in her own rooms. He, with his own hands, distributed the arms to Themines and his men; and then, in a hunting dress, met the prince as he came upstairs, and invited him to join in his sport. The invitation was declined; the king stepped back into his mother's room, and Condé for a moment was left alone; the next instant De Themines, with two of his sons, came upon him by a side passage. He was surprised into submission, and secured; but he was the only victim. The nobles whom it had also been intended to seize, had had their suspicions awakened, and succeeded in quitting Paris in safety; and, as they all had strongholds to which they could retire, and in which they could raise troops, there was as great danger of the renewal of the civil war as ever; Condé's name, while in prison, being at least as effectual with the citizens of Paris, as his presence while at liberty. Of this Concini had fatal proof; for on hearing of Condé's arrest, his mother in frenzied fear ran through the streets, crying out that Concini was

preparing to murder her son. Picard, who had never forgiven the marshal for his beating, co-operated with her, and the princess and the cobbler raised a mob which rushed to Concini's palace, and sacked it so completely, that in a few hours nothing was left but the bare walls. The only person who gained by what had taken place was De Themines, who was rewarded with 100,000 crowns, and a marshal's bâton for himself, while each of his sons received high promotion.

Queen Marie showed plainly that she felt that the arrest of the prince and the escape of his confederates had only increased the danger of the king's situation by at once taking measures to raise an army; while Louis himself was constrained to condescend to hold a Bed of Justice, in order to justify to the Parliament his arrest of the first prince of the blood. But at the same time, as the queen-mother placed more confidence in negotiations than in arms, she began to treat with the malcontent nobles, and, as each was willing to secure his own separate interest, she had not much difficulty in breaking up their confederacy. She felt safe again: and still more to strengthen herself, and to secure her favourite, Concini, she now, on the 30th of November, 1616 (the date of such an event deserves to be recorded), introduced Richelieu into the council as Secretary of State, allowing him to retain his bishopric of Luçon, and, on the ground of his episcopal rank, giving him precedence over the other members of the council, except the Cardinal de Rochefoucault, the president; though there was no precedent for a ministerial office being held by an ecclesiastic. She soon learnt, however, that she had miscalculated Richelieu's devotion to Concini, and even

to herself. He had been steadily labouring to obtain the office now conferred on him, and had been willing enough to make the Italian's favour a stepping-stone to it; but, however unworthy had been his means, the objects for which he had desired such power were such as became one conscious of great abilities. Few as had been the years of the present reign, the domestic prosperity of the country and its reputation abroad had become greatly impaired; and he conceived it to be his mission not only to restore it to the position which it had occupied at the death of Henry, but even to augment its former position and glory. The means by which he proposed to achieve this end were simple. His foreign policy was to depress the power of Austria, and to raise that of France on its ruins. His home policy was to render the monarch absolute; each idea being in fact a revival of the conceptions of Henry IV. It was with these views that that monarch had steadily resisted the schemes of Spain; it was, as we have seen, with these that he had been so careful to diminish the power of the great nobles, and to prevent any of them from obtaining a permanent hold in any of the provinces. And danger from them was more threatening now than it had been in his day, since, whatever discontent some of the great military chiefs expressed, none of them, from the Peace of Vervins to Henry's death, ventured on any acts of resistance. But for the last six years they had kept the kingdom in a state of continual disquiet by civil war, or the apprehension of civil war. To employ Richelieu's own description of the state of affairs, when he first received a place in the council, the great lords were acting, "not as the king's subjects, but as independent chieftains. The governors

of his provinces were conducting themselves like so many sovereign princes; the interest of the public was postponed to that of individuals. In a word, the king's authority was at that time so torn to shreds and so unlike what it might have been that, in the confusion, it was impossible to recognise the genuine traces of his royal power."* And to this state of things he was resolved to put an end, by establishing the monarchy as an unalloyed despotism, such as indeed it had been in theory ever since the days of St. Louis, but such as few of that monarch's successors had had vigour sufficient to render it in fact. For making this the end of his policy he has been severely blamed by one of the ablest of our historical critics; and it is wholly inconsistent with the wiser and happier views of a sovereign's position and duties which have prevailed among ourselves. But, in the first place, succeeding statesmen in France might well be excused for adopting those other ideas which† the greatest and most virtuous of the French kings believed to have been dictated to him by the will of God; and secondly, we must remember that, despotic as Richelieu wished to render the king, it was for the sake of the happiness of the people at large that he cherished that wish. The power with which he desired to invest him, though unrestrained by his subjects, was to have other restraints: those of religion, of learning,

* Richelieu, "Testament politique," quoted by Stephen, of whose translation I have availed myself, and to whose objections to his policy I have subsequently alluded.

† "With the most simple purpose of fulfilling what he [Louis IX.] supposed to be the will of God, he laid the foundation of the absolute powers, judicial and legislative, by which his successors on the French throne crushed successively the feudal powers of the Seigneurs, and the constitutional franchise of their people."—Stephen, i. 267.

of public spirit. If the king in the fulness of his sovereignty was to resemble God, like God he was to exercise it only for the protection and guidance, for the welfare, moral and substantial, of his people; while the very greatness and completeness of his power would, in the somewhat utopian fancy of the minister, exempt him from the ordinary errors, whether proceeding from vice or from weakness, of ordinary mortals. We may perceive that such a result was visionary; we may see, even without the practical commentary which the subsequent history of France supplies, that the means by which the minister proposed to attain it were but little calculated to bring it about; but it seems hard to deny the praise of philanthropy and honesty to the intention. It is clear too that Richelieu was not labouring for himself; and it is no small praise to him, in an age when the basest self-seeking was the general characteristic, to have conceived and persevered in and carried out a policy which at least was not selfish, but which, if it was mistaken in ignoring the value of liberty, and in so inverting the proper order of things as to found the happiness of the people in the power of the king, instead of establishing the power of the king on the happiness of his subjects, did yet sincerely desire the welfare of both, and sought fame for himself in securing it. But, on the other hand, though his public policy was unselfish, it is impossible to acquit him of having wielded the power of the State for the purpose of private enmity and revenge.

In one important respect Richelieu's conduct differed from that which would seem the most natural course to re-establish the prosperity of a weak and divided kingdom; he applied himself in the first instance to

measures not of home but of foreign policy. Knowing not only the object but also the means for its attainment that Henry had proposed to himself, he prepared for the war which he meditated with Spain by renewing the alliance with England, Holland, and the Protestant princes of Germany, sending ambassadors to each; and in his memoirs he has himself preserved the instructions which he drew up for the Count de Schomberg, who was entrusted with the last-mentioned negotiation, and in which he instructed him to treat "as a calumny the idea that the spiritual obedience to the Pope, which the French nation recognised, would ever lead it to embrace the political interests of Rome, to the prejudice of its ancient alliances or of its own interests; including in that phrase the welfare of those who adhered to the Reformed religion, as long as they hated Spain and were loyal Frenchmen. Though it was true that there had been many intermarriages between the French and Spanish royal families, yet no Frenchman, however sincere in his attachment to Catholicism, was so blind as to prefer a Spanish Catholic to a French Huguenot." And Schomberg was commissioned to offer the princes especial assistance towards baffling the endeavour which the King of Spain was making to unite the crowns of Hungary, Bohemia, and the empire, on the head of one of his own sons. He was further instructed to explain that the charges of corrupt profusion which had been brought against the Government of the queen-mother were wholly undeserved, since the expenditure had been incurred for the preservation of peace; in fact, that fourteen millions of livres had been distributed among the prince, M. de Mayenne, M. de Bouillon, and others, the very people who had

raised the clamour for economy. And the minister embodied the same statements in a manifesto which he circulated widely among the people. Mayenne, De Bouillon, the Duke de Nevers, and some others of the confederates, issued a counter-memorial, repeating the charges of prodigal waste, and attributing the guilt of it to the Marshal d'Ancre and his wife, whom Richelieu was not very successful in defending. But he had a stronger weapon than wordy argument in reserve; in March, 1617, he issued a proclamation in the king's name, declaring Mayenne and the Duke de Nevers rebels, and confiscating their property; and at the same time he sent three armies against them.

But this was a display of authority which as yet he was unable long to maintain. While he was present in the council all acknowledged the influence of his commanding genius; but in his private hours Louis was under a different influence. De Luynes cared nothing for the extension of his kingly power, so long as it was sufficient in its existing state to enrich himself; and, as in the Marshal d'Ancre he saw a far greater obstacle to his own aggrandisement than in the King of Spain, it was against him that he directed all his efforts. Knowing, too, that the queen-mother would sacrifice anything to defend him, he laboured also to undermine her influence and that of those whom she had lately raised to power; and in this he was assisted by her own peevish disposition and want of judgment, since, while she ostentatiously paraded her authority, and was constantly thwarting her son, both in matters of state and in trifles which he often cared more about, she was at the same time wearying his ears with frivolous complaints, and grumbling and finding fault with the things of which it was easy to

show that she and her partisans had had the management. It was not difficult, therefore, to persuade the king that he would be happier if she were removed from the Court; and when he had been brought to this conviction, Luynes proceeded to show that he would be safer also, and tampered with one of Barbin's secretaries to forge letters in that minister's name, which seemed to imply a conspiracy against his life. It only remained to rouse Louis to instant action; and, as he prided himself extremely on the success of his own artifices, by which he had tricked Condé into his arrest, it was easy to inspire him with a fancy for another plot, of which he again was to hold the strings; and it made no difference to him that it was assassination that he was now asked to countenance. He consented with childish glee; and Luynes, who knew that the Baron de Vitry, a captain of the guard, who happened to be on duty for the month, was on bad terms with the marshal, proposed to him to fulfil the king's wishes, promising him the bâton of the man whom he was to murder. Such was the almost universal wickedness and cruelty of the age that De Vitry had no difficulty in collecting a band of gentlemen of honorable birth and fair fortune to join him in the atrocious deed which he had undertaken; and the king managed the rest. As his mother had done when he entrapped Condé, he took every precaution to ensure his own escape if the blow failed. He fixed a hunting party for the 24th of April, on pretence of which he had his carriage at the gate of the Louvre; and then posted a sentinel in the courtyard, which was filled with the intended assassins, to watch for the approach of the marshal, who came every morning to attend upon the queen.

As he came in sight the sentinel gave notice to Vitry. The doomed man entered the courtyard, the assassins closed round him, and brought him to the ground with several pistol-shots, and Vitry and his brothers finished the bloody deed with their swords. Gentlemen though they were, they even robbed the dead man of his money and jewels before they left him; and the whole transaction was crowned by Louis appearing at one of the windows with his fowling-piece and sword in his hand, thanking the butchers for their act, and crying out that "Now at last he was king."

Queen Marie tried to save herself by refusing shelter to the widowed marchioness, who was arrested at the end of the week, brought to trial on charges of witchcraft, as having obtained her influence by magical arts, condemned and put to death, while the vast wealth which she and her husband had accumulated was bestowed on Luynes; but Marie gained nothing by this desertion of her friend. At first she was refused all access to the king; and Vitry was even instructed to search her rooms, which he did with studied insolence, examining the space under the bed, her chests and wardrobes, to see if they concealed any powder to blow up the king, who slept on the floor above; and at the end of a few days, after a short interview with her son, she was commanded to retire to Blois, where she was carefully watched, and where she remained a prisoner at large for nearly two years. The other events which took place at Paris at the same time reflected little credit on any one concerned, the highest in rank and station vieing with each other in acts of baseness. The moment D'Ancre's death was known in Paris the ministers, Richelieu among the rest, and all the chief nobles

present in the capital, repaired to the Louvre to congratulate the king, while he was mounted on a billiard-table to receive their addresses. Presently the President of the Parliament, with a deputation of the chief councillors, arrived to compliment him on his "happy deliverance;" and, though the representatives of the first court of justice in the kingdom, they scrupled not to affirm, in reply to questions put to them by his Majesty, that no investigation into the cause and manner of the marshal's death was requisite, because "the king's statement of his guilt was sufficient to cover all defects in form."* Louis even issued a pardon to all the princes and nobles who of late years had been in arms against him, on the ground that "they could not have acted otherwise, since they had been driven into rebellion by the oppressions of the late marshal;" while the populace, to show that the evil example of their superiors had infected all classes, forced open the vault in the church of St. Germain, where he had been buried, dragged the body through the streets, and then tore it to pieces, and burnt it.

Marie's banishment was, as a matter of course, accompanied by the fall of the ministers whom she had raised to power. Barbin was even thrown into prison, and, though she begged for his release that he might resume his place in her household, her request was refused. Richelieu was only deprived of his secretaryship; but, having found some means or other of ingratiating himself with Luynes, was allowed to

* According to some authorities the name of "Le Juste" was given to Louis on this occasion as a recognition of the fact that the marshal had justly deserved death; but others say that it refers to the justice of his aim as a sportsman; while a third explanation is, that it was suggested by his being born under Libra.

retain his place as a member of the council. But he soon ceased to act in that capacity. Of his colleagues at the board some looked coldly on him as a member of a defeated party, others were jealous of his talents, and he himself soon found reason to suspect that it was his better policy to continue to adhere to the queen-mother. He therefore obtained permission to retire to Blois, where for a while he discharged the duties of superintendent of her household, which she had destined for Barbin. But he was not long permitted to remain there: it seemed certain that his counsels would be dangerous, and probable that they might be successful, and accordingly Luynes sent him orders to return to his diocese, from which, after a time, as that seemed too near Blois, he removed him to Avignon, where he occupied himself, at least in part, in the composition of works on subjects of theological controversy, which, in the opinion of those who have read them, give rise to a suspicion that his talents in that line had been greatly overrated.*

Sillery, Jeannin, and Villeroi were replaced in their former offices; but the real power was in the hands of Luynes, who, as the young queen was of a childish, giddy character, looking on Louis more as a playfellow than as a husband, and neither seeking any influence, nor even having any opinion on political matters, was in reality without a rival. And it must be allowed in his praise that few favourites raised to power in such a manner have done so little harm. He was destitute of anything beyond the most ordinary ability, and his aims were purely selfish; but it happened fortunately for his fame, that his own

* "Vie de Richelieu," i. 19.

interests coincided with those of the kingdom. It required rest to recover from the wounds inflicted on its prosperity by the recent civil wars. He, too, desired peace to enable him to enjoy his riches and to amuse his master. And, as the greatest danger of war was from the discontent of the Huguenots, his desire for peace led him to religious toleration, and he treated their deputies with careful courtesy, and was anxious to remove from them all apprehension that their privileges were in any danger. He yielded, indeed, to the remonstrances of the Catholic bishops, and caused the king to issue an edict, confirming one of the late king, which had professed to re-establish the Catholic form of worship in Béarn, which was still in name an independent kingdom, though providing at the same time for the maintenance of Protestant ministers and colleges out of the revenues of the State. But he abstained from enforcing it, and Béarn still for some years continued to preserve its independence, and to adhere to the religion of Jeanne d'Albret. He also endeavoured to reform some grievances (chiefly concerning the taxation of the kingdom) which were generally complained of, and, with this view, at the end of the year, he persuaded the king to convoke an assembly of the Notables to meet at Rouen. The Notables were an extraordinary council convened on occasional emergencies, and selected by the sovereign according to his own discretion. Henry IV. had had recourse to them shortly before the Peace of Vervins, and the rule by which he appeared to have chosen the members was followed now. Eleven ecclesiastics, thirteen nobles, and twenty-five members of the different sovereign courts of justice were summoned to aid the king with their advice; but the complaints

laid before them were framed in too general terms to point the way to any relief; and in fact the measures they adopted rather added to the distress of the really poor. They relieved the clergy and the nobles of some taxes from which they claimed exemption; but, though they admitted the evils of the system sanctioned by la Paulette, they substituted for that tax another, as a kind of forced loan, which in reality perpetuated that system, and even extended it by applying to a great number of offices which had not hitherto been affected by it; and, as we shall hereafter see, in spite of the complaints continually made of it, it continued in force, till, with all other existing customs, it was swept away at the Revolution. But the poorer classes obtained no relief from the taxation which ground them down, or from the monopolies which enhanced the price of the most necessary articles of consumption.

Of foreign affairs, too, the favourite equally assumed the direction, allowing the ostensible ministers but little voice in them; indeed, Villeroi, the Secretary of State, to whose department they belonged, died before the end of 1617. His talents were less remarkable than his honesty. Though he had been upwards of half a century in office, he had scarcely added a hundred a year to his private fortune;* and, though his great experience made it difficult to replace him while Richelieu was kept at a distance, yet his want of commanding abilities, and his reserved and timid character, which made him backward in recommending measures

* Compare what Horace Walpole says of the Duke of Newcastle, who had been minister for about the same period of time: "My old kinsman has died, after fifty years of office, £300,000 poorer than when he entered upon it: a very unministerial proceeding."

of his own, or in expressing his opinion of those suggested by others, caused his tacit supersession by Luynes to be less remarked. From foreign wars France continued free; and under his guidance she assumed the dignified position of mediator between Spain and Savoy, in a war provoked by the arrogant claim set up for their sovereign by the Spanish commanders in the north of Italy, to be "above treaties, and to be governed by no laws save his own moderation and meekness," and willingly entered into by Charles Emmanuel, in the hope of expelling the foreigners from Italy; and her intervention was conducted with such success that the conditions of the peace between Spain, Savoy, and Venice, which was concluded in the course of the winter of 1617-18, were mainly in accordance with the suggestions of the French council. But no politics ever made Luynes forget his own advancement. He obtained for himself the rank of duke and peer; the offices of lieutenant-governor of Normandy and governor of the Isle of France, and subsequently of Picardy; and, when he had reached these dignities, he also obtained the hand of Marie, daughter of the Duke de Montbazon. She was related to the noblest families in the kingdom, and it did not lessen her importance in his eyes when he found that she was not too scrupulous to desire to fascinate the king, that she was sufficiently handsome and dexterous to gain her object. The only blunder for his own interests with which he is chargeable, was perhaps to be seen in his conduct towards the queen-mother. She had made more than one attempt to recover the confidence of her son, which he had continually baffled, till he learnt that the people in general were beginning to pity her, and that more than one

plot was in agitation for her deliverance. And, though he crushed these attempts, and procured the conviction of several persons whom he accused of being privy to them (Barbin, though he was in prison, being among the number), he felt that in keeping both her and Condé in confinement, he was aiming at too much; but Condé being grasping and ambitious, and having an inalienable right to a seat in the council if at liberty, would be more directly an opponent to himself than she could be. And he was contemplating securing her good-will, and making a merit of releasing her, when he was anticipated by the Duke d'Epernon. By the agency of a Florentine priest, that nobleman opened a communication with Marie, and undertook to have a sufficient force at hand to receive and protect her if she could escape from the castle. She, admitting no one into the secret but the Count de Brenne, her equerry, and three of her most trusted servants, whose co-operation was requisite, on a dark night at the end of February, 1619, descended by a ladder from the window of her apartment to the platform on which stood the tower in which she had been confined; but when she found she had to descend by another ladder to the foot of the ramparts, her courage failed her. Her attendants, whose lives depended on her completing her escape, wrapped her in a cloak, and let her slide down the second ladder like an inanimate bundle; and when the danger was over she revived. A carriage was in waiting, in which she at once drove to Loches, from which place the duke conducted her to Angoulême; and while there they both wrote letters to the king, justifying what they had done, and promising obedience to his will in every other particular, but at the same

time making vigorous representations of the distress of the country, and urging the dismissal of the existing ministry, or at least of the favourite. Luynes was in a great strait; he had brought his mind to be willing that the queen should be released, provided that she could be made to feel that she owed her liberty to himself; but now the advantage that he had hoped to secure for himself had passed over to others, and, instead of obtaining an increase of favour, he saw efforts made to produce his disgrace. Louis, too, was displeased, and pretending to think that D'Epernon had carried the queen off against her will, and was keeping her in restraint, levied an army to attack him. But such a pretence imposed on nobody; even Luynes grew ashamed of advising a son to make war on his own mother. Richelieu, ever keen-sighted, saw in his perplexity an opportunity of regaining his goodwill: he offered his services, assuring him that no wish was so near his heart as to serve the king, except that of serving him; and Luynes gladly availed himself of his influence with the queen, and empowered him to treat with her for a complete reconciliation, and the wily bishop congratulated himself on having won the king's favour too, when Louis condescended to write him an autograph letter desiring him to undertake the task, as one success in which would give him the greatest possible pleasure.* Louis would seem to have been more sincere in these professions than the queen, for he earnestly invited her to return at once to Court, an invitation which she sullenly refused; and, having stipulated for a large sum for the payment of her debts, and for another for D'Eper-

* "Vie de Richelieu," i. 31.

non, to make amends for the loss of his government of Boulogne, which the king's forces had surprised, she retired to Angers. Scandal, which in those days spared royal personages as little or perhaps less than the meanest of their subjects, imputed to her and Richelieu an intimacy which neither became her as a queen nor him as a prelate of the church; but, if it was so, he certainly had but little of the influence of a lover over her actions. He was sincerely desirous thoroughly to reconcile her to the king, since on such a reconciliation his own hopes of recovering power were founded; but she persisted in keeping aloof. Throughout the summer Angers was the head-quarters of all the malcontents in the kingdom; and most especially did she seek to ingratiate herself with the Huguenots, who held their triennial assembly this year at Loudun, in which they made many complaints of the violations of the engagements into which the Court had entered with them, which were not wholly unfounded. In the autumn, while King Louis was at Tours, Richelieu did at last persuade her to visit him there, and for a few days they lived together on terms of dutiful affection; but still she refused to accompany him to Paris, and returned to Angers for the winter.

Her ill-temper proved advantageous to Condé, for Luynes, finding he had no prospect of obtaining her favour, released the prince, and presented him to the king, who received him with great cordiality. But his enlargement had nearly proved a source of disaster to the State, for, by his capricious demeanour and violence of language, he gave such offence to the Duke de Mayenne, the Duke de Longueville, and other great nobles, that they retired to Angers, and, offering their

services to Queen Marie, persuaded that weak and wayward princess to recommence war, though she had not a single complaint to allege against either the king or his government. What those whom he had thought to make his friends would not do for Luynes, his enemies now did for him. As soon as it was known that Marie was not disinclined to listen to the advice of Mayenne and his party, other nobles of great influence, the Duke de Tremouille, the Marshal de Boisdauphin, the Duke de Rohan, and many more hastened to range themselves on her side. They formed a very powerful confederacy, and, under the pressure of instant danger, Luynes conducted himself with unexpected resolution, and with a judgment of which he was not previously supposed to be possessed. The confederates had a numerous army at their disposal, but, from the necessity of using it to garrison a great number of towns at the same time, they were unable to concentrate a large force at any one spot; while the royal army, though less numerous, could be kept better together. Luynes perceived his advantage in this; but he also saw another of still greater weight. He felt that the king's presence with the army would indeed be a tower of strength; and when he quitted Paris to join it in Normandy, he persuaded Louis to accompany him, and to take the nominal command. His expectations were justified by the result. Though the royal army did not exceed 8800 men, with six guns, no noble dared resist it when it was known that the king was with it; and the whole confederacy melted away in a single month. July had begun before the king reached head-quarters. Without striking a blow he recovered Rouen, Caen, in short, the whole province of Normandy, the Duke

de Longueville retiring before him. Before the end of the month he had crossed to the southward, had overrun Angers, and was on the point of penetrating into Poitou, where the reciprocal jealousies of Mayenne and D'Epernon proved a still greater obstacle to any effectual resistance than the scruples of De Longueville; while Richelieu, who had the chief weight in the queen's councils, was jealous of both, seeing that, if the war should be continued successfully, they, as soldiers, would get the credit rather than a man of his own peaceful profession. At the beginning of August, therefore, he persuaded the queen to send him to negotiate for a cessation of the war and an amnesty for her adherents. Her requests were granted; and now at last, since she had been brought to feel her weakness, there seemed a prospect of the cessation of the unnatural quarrels in the royal family.

But Louis was unwilling to lay down his arms entirely; he had acquired a fondness for military exercises, for drill, and the details of regimental discipline and manœuvring, and the retreat of the nobles before him, in this war of a month, convinced him that he was the heir of his father's warlike talents, which it was then the fashion to estimate highly. He had looked around him for some other object against which to move his army; and again he found it in his own dominions. The Thirty Years' War had just broken out in Germany, and, in spite of his general desire to follow his father's policy, and to humble the House of Austria, he allowed himself to be convinced that in this instance it was his interest to support it, and that the cause of the Emperor was the cause of all kings, and also of the Church. In fact, having every quality of a tyrant but the energy, he

hated the foundation of the Reformation, liberty of opinion, above all other principles. With these feelings he exerted himself to prevent the different princes of Germany from supporting the Elector Palatine; and the Treaty of Ulm, which in reality decided the contest by leaving that prince to contend single-handed with the whole of the empire, was mainly the work of the French ambassadors. The opposition in which he thus placed himself to the Protestants in Germany not unnaturally embittered him also against those in his own dominions; and as the edicts for the re-establishment of Catholicism in Béarn were still evaded, he resolved on marching thither to compel obedience to them at the point of the sword. The whole population of that little kingdom could not have furnished an army equal to his. Without meeting the slightest resistance, he occupied Pau, the capital, and Navarreins, the most important fortress, compelled the registration and execution of the edicts, and issued another, by which he abolished the privileges of Béarn as an independent kingdom, and united it, as a province, to the crown of France. And, still more persuaded than before that he was a great conqueror, he returned to Paris in November, 1620, and entered it in a sort of triumph, amid the acclamations of the people.

But this extinction of the independence of the Béarnais was a prelude to a more serious and more troublesome war. Their submission lasted only while the king and his army were among them. The Marquis de la Force, who had for some time been their governor, and whom Louis left in possession of his authority, was himself a Protestant, and secretly encouraged their resistance to the introduction of the Catholic clergy and

the Catholic rites. And the intolerance which had been displayed towards them awakened the fears of the Protestants in the other provinces, who had some grounds for complaining that the concessions promised to them in the last treaty of Loudun had not been carried out. The citizens of Rochelle considered themselves as the leaders and champions of their Huguenot brethren, and as such invited a meeting of deputies from the different districts to meet in their city to consider the state of their religion, and to lay their complaints before the king. Louis forbade the meeting; and the chief nobles of the party, and especially Duplessis Mornay, the unwearied adviser of moderation and wisdom, earnestly counselled submission to the royal ordinance, beseeching their brethren not to give their enemies such a handle for accusing them of disaffection to the State, as would be afforded by persistence in an act which the king had characterised as treason. But the lower classes, and the clergy who ruled them, were too full of fanaticism to listen to their warnings. They refused to recall their invitation. Deputies from all quarters arrived in Rochelle, and, having first celebrated a solemn fast, they opened their sittings on the day after Christmas, 1620, and at once began their work, and commenced the new year by addressing a remonstrance to the king, justifying their assembly on the ground that Condé and Luynes had assured them, on the dissolution of the conferences in Loudun, that, if the conditions agreed to were not punctually performed, they should be at liberty to meet again; and complaining that the Catholic priests in every part of the kingdom had stirred up the populace to offer violence to their religion: they particularly specified Lyons, Dijon,

Bourges, and Moulins, cities in different and distant provinces, as places where their dead had been torn from their graves, their churches burnt, and their ministers expelled, without any redress being obtainable for such acts of violence. Louis replied with angry threats of instant chastisement, and prepared for war. The sword of Constable had been for some time undisposed of, and he now gave it to Luynes, though he had never seen a battle, making amends to Lesdiguiéres, who had conquered in a hundred, and to whom the post had been promised, on condition of his becoming a Catholic, by giving him the rank of Marshal-general, and, as such, precedence over the other Marshals. The Huguenots, too, made their preparations for a campaign with a confidence which was not the less entire for the want of any sufficient grounds for it. The Duke de Bouillon was confined to Sedan by illness; but the Marquis de Chateauneuf, almost the only man of rank in the assembly at Rochelle, went to Niort, to meet the three dukes, De Rohan, De la Tremouille, and Soubise (De Rohan's brother), and the noble who, next to Bouillon, had the greatest territorial power among the Protestant leaders, and claimed their assistance, telling them at the same time that the assembly at Rochelle did not ask for their opinions or advice, but that, if they refused their co-operation, that body could defend itself without them. They did, however, urge their advice, and recommended instant submission; but, when it was rejected, Rohan thought it due to his honour not to desert his party; the others agreed with him, and thus allowed themselves to be dragged into rebellion against their judgment. The Marquis de la Force and the Marquis de Chatillon followed their example.

But their united resources were unable to collect an army able to encounter that of the king in the open field; and their resistance was confined to the defence of a few towns more or less strongly fortified.

For the army which was now mustered for the king's service amounted to 48,000 men; the main body of which was collected on the southern side of Poitou, waiting for the arrival of the king to take the command in person. At the beginning of May he reached it, accompanied by the new Constable and the new Marshal-general, who was the real commander-in-chief, and conductor of the military operations; though in the severities exercised towards the rebels when subdued he bore no part, but had rather the mortification of seeing his remonstrances against them treated with neglect, if not with disdain; and, as was often the custom both before and afterwards with French armies, a troop of ladies of high degree also swelled the royal train. Both the queens, the Duchess de Luynes, whose presence was supposed to be required by the king rather than by her husband, the Duchess de Montmorenci, and many more of the best and worst reputations in Paris, were eager to share in a campaign which promised all the excitement with but few of the dangers of war. But however resolute had been the language of the assembly at Rochelle, when the time for action arrived they found themselves still weaker than they had been supposed to be. Even of those leaders who at first expressed a willingness to imitate the Duke de Rohan, the majority made their peace with the king before it was too late; and, before the end of the month, that duke and Soubise were the only chiefs of reputation left them. The king commenced his campaign by a

judicious mixture of conciliation and resolution. He issued a proclamation, in which he assured the Huguenots that he had no intention of abridging the privileges which he had previously granted them; and, at the same time, after receiving the submission of the greater part of Poitou, he laid siege to St. Jean d'Angely, where Soubise commanded in person. It held out nearly a month; and then Louis, leaving D'Epernon with one division of his army to besiege Rochelle, pushed on himself into Guienne, where town after town submitted to him; and he met with no real resistance till he reached Montauban, where the Count d'Orval, a son of the great Sully, commanded the garrison, and, in spite of the entreaties of his father, who thought his success impossible, defied all the power of the royal forces. An event which occurred a few days before the commencement of the siege, if it did not weaken the king's army, certainly lessened the eagerness of the nation for its success. Du Vair, who had succeeded Sillery as keeper of the seals, died; and Luynes, who had seen, in his utter ignorance of war, no impediment to his becoming the head of the army, thought himself equally fit to become the head of the law, and persuaded Louis to add the chancellorship to his military dignities. Yet, in the general belief, the king was already becoming weary of him; and they had frequent disagreements, which, though the courtier-like but shrewd Bassompierre compared them to the quarrels between man and wife, were gradually loosening his hold on the king's goodwill. Montauban held out with a gallantry which attracted the notice of the whole kingdom. It originally had a garrison of nearly 5000 men, and, when the siege had lasted nearly six weeks, De Rohan

succeeded in reinforcing it with 1000 more. More than one attempt was made to carry it by assault, but they were all repulsed; and in one the Duke de Mayenne was killed at the head of the stormers. The trenches had been opened on the 18th of August; in two months from that time the king had lost 7000 men; the garrison was as resolute as ever, and fever began to attack the besiegers. At the end of another fortnight, Bassompierre, whose character for courage was so high that he could afford to give prudent advice, urged the king to raise the siege; Louis consented, with tears in his eyes; and on the 2nd of November his retreat relieved the poor citizens of Montauban from further apprehension. D'Epernon was equally unsuccessful at Rochelle, where the proximity of the sea baffled every attempt to prevent the introduction of supplies; and, in order to avoid the appearance of finishing the campaign with nothing but disaster, the king was forced to attack the comparatively insignificant fortress of Monheur, on the Garonne. As 260 soldiers composed its whole garrison, it could not hold out long; but Louis, exasperated by his recent failures, sullied his success by great cruelty, massacring the greater part of the inhabitants, and sacking and then burning the town.

The campaign had been fortunate for no one: certainly not for the Huguenots, who, though successful in two places, had been stripped of the greater number of their towns, and had lost many productive districts; nor for the nation at large, who, for the support of the war, had been compelled to submit to a large increase of taxation, and to see the Paulette, which nearly all classes had singled out for especial dislike, permanently re-established; nor for Louis, who, even in

his own opinion, by his repulse from before Montauban, had sullied his laurels gained in the former war; nor for Luynes, who, while the army lay before Monheur, caught a fever, and died on the 14th of December. Louis scarcely dissembled his joy; he was tired even of the duchess; and the populace of Paris, who, if insatiable rapacity and exorbitant wealth were offences, had at least equal reason to be offended with him as with D'Ancre, were unanimous in their exultation. But little as had been his real influence on the events of the war, Luynes's death caused some delay in the renewal of operations, partly because it rendered it necessary to reconstruct the ministry; and partly because the king, who could never rely, do, or act for himself, had to choose a new favourite. The easier task was the reconstruction of the ministry. Henri de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, was appointed President of the Council; the Count de Schomberg became Minister of Finance and Commandant of the Artillery; an union of incongruous offices, justified, or supposed to be justified, by the precedent of Sully. Sillery received the seals, and his son, the Marquis de Puysieux, became Secretary of State. But no one to whom Louis was likely to incline seemed to wish to occupy the post of favourite; and least of all did Bassompierre, of whom the ministry were most afraid, since he had both the talent which Louis most esteemed, namely, courage and skill in war, and since he was also a courtier before he was a soldier, and knew as well as any man in France how to ingratiate himself with a prince, and how to retain his good-will. Thus the question who should become the unofficial ruler of the kingdom was soon narrowed to a choice between the queen-mother and Condé.

Both were eager to obtain the predominant influence. Jeannin and Sillery strongly recommended the re-admission of Marie to the council, which even those who opposed it resisted not so much from dislike of herself, as from fear that she would certainly effect the re-introduction of Richelieu also, whose pro-dominant and overbearing genius was an object of dread to all. She was invited to resume her place, and Condé, who, on the news of Luynes's death, had at once rejoined the king, likewise resumed his, of which indeed he had never been formally deprived; and recovered also his influence over the king by uniting with the ministers in urging an immediate renewal of the war.

Towards the end of March the king quitted Paris for the second campaign, Condé and Bassompierre accompanying him. He had wished likewise to take his young brother, the Duke d'Anjou, afterwards known as the Duke d'Orléans, had not Queen Marie opposed it. And many suspected that Condé's eager-ness for the war, and for the presence of his two young cousins, was prompted by the fact of his being the next heir to the crown in the event of any mis-chance befalling them. Lesdiguiéres, who had suc-ceeded Luynes as Constable, was not present with the army, reserving to himself the more honorable post of mediator, and incessantly labouring to induce the Huguenot leaders to make, in good time, the submission which he clearly saw to be unavoidable in the end, and to persuade Louis to accept it graciously and mercifully. The campaign was far more successful than that of the previous year. It opened well for the royal arms, the Duke de Soubise, with a force which, though small, was still a considerable portion of the

Huguenot army, being cut off on the Isle of Rhé by the tide, as he was preparing to conduct his men across the mouth of the Loire, and nearly the whole of his troops being either slain or forced to surrender. Soubise himself escaped; but of his army of 7000 men, not 500 were equally fortunate. Again leaving D'Epernon to besiege Rochelle, the king pushed on southward with the main body of his army, reducing all the places which lay in his way till, at the beginning of July, he reached Toulouse; and, at every place where he met the slightest resistance, treating the inhabitants with the most savage cruelty—massacring the men, abandoning the women to the mercy of his soldiers, who knew that cruelty and outrage to the vanquished was the best way to merit the favour of their victorious sovereign, rasing the fortifications, and burning the citizens' houses. It was strange conduct for a king to pursue in his own dominions; and it was not by such treatment that his father had gained the affections of his subjects.

Towards the end of the summer Louis appeared before Montpelier: the citizens would have opened their gates to Lesdiguiéres, who by this time had joined the army; but dreaded the king and Condé too much to surrender to them; and, when their offers were rejected through the influence of Condé, who sought to secure his influence with the king by showing himself equally cruel, they nerved themselves for resistance, and rivalled Montauban in the stoutness of their endurance, and in the losses which they inflicted on their assailants. But by this time even the most obstinate of their chiefs saw that the only advantage to be reaped from such a display of valour was the opportunity which it might afford the gar-

rison and the whole Huguenot party of obtaining more favorable conditions on their complete submission. The Duke de Rohan was at all times eager to obtain good terms for his brother Protestants; and by this time Louis, whom the check received last year at Montauban, and this year at Montpelier, had sufficed to weary of the war, was willing to grant them. The only obstacle to his doing so was his fear of Condé; but the prince luckily left the army for a short time, and, in the interval, the terms of peace were agreed upon, and a treaty was signed on the 20th of October. The Protestants lost much; but far less than they might have expected. They ceded the towns which they had been hitherto permitted to hold, with the exception of Rochelle and Montauban, and they were deprived of the right of holding their triennial assemblies; but they were allowed still to exercise their religion as before: and, if the treaty now made had been fairly carried out, in a merely religious point of view they would have been left as well off as they had been before they began their rebellion. But they had soon reason to complain that the execution of it was onesided. The fulfilment of every concession and act of submission to which they were bound was promptly and rigorously exacted; but the privileges to which they were still entitled were systematically evaded. In law their religion was still no disqualification for office; but in practice Protestants were removed from every post of importance, and Catholics were appointed in their stead. They were still allowed to perform their accustomed and necessary religious ceremonies; but the Catholic priests, the populace, the soldiers, sometimes even the highest officials, insulted them with impunity while so

engaged. The king had engaged to put no military garrison in Montpelier, and to build no citadel there: but the governor introduced troops into the city, and began to lay the foundations of a fortress to overawe it, and neither the citizens nor the Duke de Rohan, who, on their part, complained of so flagrant a violation of the treaty, could obtain the slightest redress. It was plain that though nominal toleration was still permitted to exist, the policy of the Government was to discourage Protestantism by every method short of actual persecution.

A week after the conclusion of the treaty of Montpelier Jeannin died; soon afterwards Condé procured the dismissal of Schomberg; Sillery and the Marquis de Puysieux were deprived of their offices, probably through the same influence, because they had had a share in the conclusion of the Peace of Montpelier; and for some time the kingdom was almost without a ministry. The only measure worthy of notice either in domestic or foreign policy which was adopted in the year 1623, a treaty between France, Venice, and Savoy, to expel the Germans and Spaniards from the Valteline, being the work of Louis himself, not in its original conception, but in the consent which he gave to the proposition of Charles Emmanuel in July, 1620. The inhabitants of the Valteline, who were Italian Catholics, had risen against their masters, the Grisons, who were Germans and mostly Protestants, and taking them by surprise, had massacred the Protestant portion of them, in imitation of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The suggestion of this atrocity was imputed to the Duke de Feria, now the governor of Spanish Lombardy, in hopes to find in its consequences a means of making his sovereign master of the Valte-

line, which in a military point of view was of the greatest importance to both France and Germany, as containing the most available passes from either country into Italy. The Grisons at once flew to arms to recover the Valteline, the Venetians aided them with money, and De Feria, on the other hand, marched an army into the district to maintain the revolt. The Venetians persuaded Louis, or rather Luynes, to adopt their views of the danger of allowing the Spaniards to obtain a footing in the Valteline; and Bassompierre was sent as ambassador to Madrid to remonstrate and to treat. He reached the Spanish capital in March, 1621, where he found Philip III.* dying; and he was forced to wait to open his negotiations till the new government was settled; for Philip IV., though only a boy of sixteen, at once took upon himself to cashier his father's ministers: the Duke de Lerma he banished, the Duke d'Ossuna he threw into prison, and he entrusted the whole conduct of his affairs to the Count Olivarés, a man of no experience in politics, and of a violent and overbearing temper. With him however Bassompierre succeeded in concluding a treaty which, as those principally concerned in it were not

* The death of Philip, as related by Bassompierre (Journal, p. 228), affords an amusing instance of the rigour of Spanish etiquette. As it was very cold, a pan of coals was brought into his library and placed near his chair. As the coals burnt up the fire caught his face and scorched it, but it did not become his Majesty to draw back his chair. The Marquis de Pibar, one of the gentlemen in waiting, was not of sufficiently high rank to remove the brasier, but seeing how the king was suffering, he suggested to his colleague the Duke d'Alva to do it. The Duke d'Alva objected that to do so would be an interference with the Duke d'Usseda, to whom belonged the arrangement of everything relating to the king's person; and when they sent for D'Usseda, he was out; so as the king could not move himself, and as no one could be found to remove the brasier, both stood in their places till the heat threw the king into a fever. That brought on erysipelas; and of erysipelas and etiquette his Majesty died.

consulted, pleased no one. It settled that the Grisons should recover the Valteline on granting an amnesty to those concerned in the late revolt and the massacre; that the Catholic religion should be established in the valley; that the Germans should cease to interfere in its affairs; and that the thirteen Swiss cantons should guarantee the performance of these conditions. But the inhabitants of the Valteline, secretly instigated by De Feria to disregard the arrangements of his own court, and assured by the Archduke Leopold, the emperor's brother, of that sovereign's support, were not inclined to submit without a struggle to the Grisons; the Grisons objected to the amnesty; and the Swiss cantons absolutely refused to guarantee the arrangement. The Grisons took up arms and invaded the Valteline; De Feria and Leopold, constituting themselves allies of the Valtelines, attacked the Grisons with overwhelming numbers, and cut their army to pieces. Leopold pretended by his own decree to annex a large portion of the Grison territory to the Tyrol of which he was count, and the whole valley became a scene of violence and bloodshed, till, at the end of 1622, the Duke of Savoy, meeting Louis at Avignon, arranged with him the treaty which has already been mentioned, by which the three contracting powers bound themselves to keep on foot a combined army of 40,000 men till order should be restored by the complete re-establishment of the Grisons in their legitimate authority over the Valteline. But, as if things never were to be settled on a secure foundation, this treaty was hardly signed before it was superseded, on the demand of Spain, by a reference of the whole dispute to the decision of the Pope; and the reference came to nothing in conse-

quence of the death of Gregory XV. almost immediately after it had been agreed to, and the election of Urban VIII., whose views of Italian interests were wholly different from those of his predecessor.

Meanwhile, though still in the background, Richelieu had made one important step towards future power; in the autumn of 1622 he had been created a cardinal, through the influence of Queen Marie, and in spite of the secret endeavours of Louis himself to prevent his promotion. And at last, in the spring of 1624, he was readmitted into the council, but without any positive office; indeed, the terms of his appointment seemed expressly to bar his return to his old post of Secretary of State, though it had been vacant ever since the dismissal of De Puysieux. But it was hardly possible that he should fail to engross the chief power in any government in which he had a share; and when, a few weeks afterwards, a commission was appointed to treat with Lord Holland and Lord Carlisle, who came from England as ambassadors to negotiate a marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Princess Henrietta Maria, he was nominated one of the commissioners, and in virtue of his rank as cardinal assumed the precedence over his colleagues. From this time forth, whatever offices were nominally enjoyed by others, he may be looked on as the chief, it may almost be said as the sole minister; and he began with steady perseverance to carry out the policy which, as we have seen, he had already conceived seven years before. The connexion with England entirely suited his views, since an alliance with that country and with Holland still seemed to him the most effectual method of breaking the power of the House of Austria. And he had a second reason

for wishing to confirm those alliances, since those countries, as the chief Protestant and naval powers of northern Europe, were the only ones who were likely to be both inclined and able to assist the city of Rochelle, which he intended to take the first opportunity of subduing. It was characteristic of him that, though seven years before he had been ostentatiously proud of his office as secretary, now as soon as he had entirely established his power, he took great pains to conceal its extent and character from the nation, and even from the king. When he first returned to the council the Marquis de Vieuville, a pompous, hasty man, of very moderate capacity, was Minister of Finance. His want of tact made enemies of nearly all with whom he was brought into contact, and at last of the king himself, who, having agreed to dismiss him, one evening at the end of the summer loaded him with expressions of kindness, and sent officers to arrest him as soon as he had quitted the royal presence. And in the discussions how the vacant office should be filled up, Richelieu took occasion to advise his Majesty to abandon his custom of confiding in any one particular minister to the exclusion of his colleagues. There ought, he said, to be no divisions among the ministry. If any one attempted to engross the whole authority, he would be doing an injury both to the State and to the king; and an endeavour on the part of any one to possess himself of the king's ear, and to do secretly what ought to be resolved on by the whole body, could have no other object but to conceal from the king either that person's incompetency or his mischievous disposition.* He followed up this ad-

* Richelieu, "Memoirs," c. xv.

vice by persuading the king to recall Schomberg, and to fill up most of the other vacant offices; and to convince the nation of his own incorruptibility, he also instituted a tribunal to inquire into cases of malversation, which prosecuted and punished with such rigour a large proportion of the different officers employed in the collection and receipt of the revenue, that the fines which it levied amounted to seven millions of livres.

But still his first object was the diminution of the power of the House of Austria, in both its branches, Spain and the Empire; and it was a power against which the statesmen of that day might well think it a paramount necessity to guard, extending as it did over nearly the whole of Europe, except France, these islands, the States of the Netherlands, which had recently thrown off its yoke, and one or two Italian principalities; while to these vast territories were added the most valuable portions of America, and the settlements of Portugal (at this time a part of the Spanish dominions) in India. Yet, as prudent as he was energetic, Richelieu did not contemplate involving his own country in war; he knew that she required peace to develope her resources, and trusted for a time to his diplomatic talents to persuade other nations to fight her battles. And with these views, though himself a prince of the Catholic Church, he did not hesitate to encourage the Protestant party in the empire, pleading that he had been a Frenchman before he was a churchman, and that as such his first duty was to succour and support the allies of France. One of them, as we have seen, was the Duke of Savoy; and as there could hardly be a greater damage done to the Spaniards than what would be inflicted by cutting off

their communications with Italy, he sent an army, under the Marquis de Cœuvres, into the territory of the Grisons, to expel the garrisons which the Archduke Leopold had placed there, and to re-establish the authority of the Grisons in the Valteline. In the same character of ally of Charles Emmanuel he sent Lesdiguiéres with a well-appointed force to aid him in an attack on the Republic of Genoa; though so utterly was he unable to justify such a step by a single complaint, that he abstained from any declaration of war, and throughout the expedition the king's standard was never displayed either on sea or on land. The combined army easily overran the whole territory. They took Gavi, Voltaggio, and might probably have captured Genoa itself, had not the commanders disagreed. But Lesdiguiéres, resenting the tone of command employed by the duke, pronounced his army insufficiently provided to undertake a siege, and remained inactive; and, after a time, several vessels, with money freights of enormous value, succeeded in entering the port in safety; while, on the landward side, the Duke de Feria advanced to the relief of the city with a force far superior in numbers and quality to that of the besiegers, and compelled them to retreat. Neither side appeared likely to gain much, or to do the other much injury by the prosecution of the war, and when this was made clear to both they presently agreed to a peace, which was signed at Monzon, in Aragon, in March, 1626, on the basis of re-establishing the affairs of the Grisons and the Valteline, which had furnished the original pretext for hostilities, on their former footing.

But this war in the south-east gave rise to another war in the west. The Protestants of Rochelle, as we

have seen, had reason to complain of the imperfect execution or systematic evasion of some of the conditions in their favour, which the king had agreed to at the Peace of Montpelier. They could obtain no redress from the courts of justice, in which the judges were not ashamed to declare that the king could not be bound by any agreement with his own subjects, much less with heretics and rebels; and, hopeless of obtaining their rights by fair means, and thinking that the employment of the best army then on foot and of the ablest general in the kingdom in Piedmont, afforded an unusually fair chance of extorting them by force, the Duke de Soubise once more took up arms. Having collected a few small vessels he seized the Isle of Rhé, in front of Rochelle, and surprised a squadron of seven men-of-war of the largest class, which the Duke de Nevers had in the port of Blavet. They composed nearly the whole of the French navy, and there was good reason to suppose that Richelieu intended to employ them in the blockade of the city. The Duke de Vendôme tried to cut him off, drawing a stout chain across the entrance of Blavet, which was exceedingly narrow. But Soubise waited for a fair wind, and when it came, charged the barrier, cut through the chain, and once more reaching the open sea, made himself master of the Isle d'Oleron also. This success appeared to De Rohan so important and so likely to dispose the king to listen to reason, that he also raised his voice to demand the honest execution of the treaty of Montpelier; and his arguments were zealously seconded by the old Marshal Lesdiguiéres, who, though he had himself renounced the tenets of the Protestants, never forsook the interests of his former co-religionists. But neither the duke

nor the marshal produced any impression on Richelieu, and De Rohan, having now committed himself to the cause, finding entreaties ineffectual, also took up arms. An assembly of the Huguenots of Languedoc appointed him their general, and soon raised a force sufficient to encounter the best army that the king could send against him, without weakening that employed in Savoy: for the days of large armies had not yet arrived. The army which Louis had commanded in Poitou the year before had represented almost the whole available strength of the kingdom. And, now that Lesdiguiéres had 20,000 beyond the Alps, an antagonist of the Government could reckon that a strong force could not be raised against himself without some portion of the marshal's troops being withdrawn. And his calculation was so far borne out by the result, that the force which was given to two marshals, D'Epernon and De Themines, with which to act against him, was not sufficient to enable them to attack him in the open field. They did not dare to attack Montauban, nor even Castres, though De Rohan had no one better to entrust with the defence of that important town than his own wife; and they confined their operations to ravaging the surrounding country, giving to the flames the crops, the orchards, the houses, and the villages, as if they were in an enemy's land, and not one inhabited by their own countrymen and ruled over by their own king. Soubise, on his part, equalled the royal generals in folly and cruelty; laying waste Guienne with such ferocity that he roused the populace in Bordeaux and Toulouse to revenge his conduct by massacring all the Protestants within their reach. And the only engagement of any kind which took place during the

whole campaign was a naval one between the squadron which Soubise now had under his command, and one which Louis had borrowed from England* and Holland, had manned with French crews, and placed under the command of the Duke de Montmorenci, Admiral of France, and the Marshal Thoiras, who defeated Soubise, and captured a portion of his squadron. Unable to continue the war which he had weakly provoked, Soubise sought refuge in England, and Charles, who had lately succeeded his father, in order to pacify his own subjects, who were indignant at any help having been furnished to subdue their brother Protestants in France, now mediated with such effect between Louis and the Rochellois, that the king consented to preserve to them all the privileges which had been granted to them by the treaty of Montpelier, with the additional right of keeping up the fortifications which they had recently erected. And Charles himself agreed to guarantee the observance of these conditions. We shall see that a year or two later Charles, or rather Buckingham, became as eager to assist Rochelle as they had now been to secure its submission; and such was the infelicity of the plans adopted by the English government, and such the want of energy shown in their execution, that their friendship proved more injurious to the city then, than their enmity had been on this occasion.

* Richelieu had expected to have had the aid of the English sailors also. The ships had been lent by King James to act against the Genoese; but in the spring of this year James died, and the Duke of Buckingham persuaded Charles, who succeeded him, to allow them on their way to aid Louis against Rochelle; but when this change of their destination was made known to the sailors they mutinied, and, when it was persisted in, deserted the ships, which were thus left empty. See the author's "History of the British Navy," i. 53.

CHAPTER VII.

The two treaties of Monzon and Rochelle left the kingdom in the enjoyment of momentary peace, and, having thus given a respite to his two enemies, the House of Austria and the Huguenots, Richelieu had leisure to turn against the third party, on whose abasement he had resolved, the princes and nobles of the land. It is impossible to speak of his treatment of them in other terms than those of the severest reprobation, even while admitting that neither the king nor the people could enjoy security or tranquillity until their power was placed on a different footing. In considering the history of these times, we must carefully remember that the nobles against whom Richelieu, and Henry IV. before him, took such precautions, were very different in character and in their objects from those who in earlier days had struggled so sternly with our own sovereigns in England. Those iron barons were indeed at least as haughty and as resolute as the French dukes; but the objects for which they withstood their princes were not their own privileges and aggrandisement (though it cannot be assumed that personal jealousies had not at times some share in promoting their movements), but the liberties of the whole nation. They were ambitious, and they were fierce; their measures were not always those best calculated for the ends which they had in view, and their demands sometimes threatened to encroach

dangerously on the rightful prerogatives of the Crown; but there is a great difference between Fitzwalter and his confederates extorting Magna Charta, or De Montfort seeking the remedy for acknowledged misgovernment in the assembly of a Parliament; and Condé making war to get one sum of money, making peace to get a second, and betraying his confederates for a third; or even Lesdiguiéres, who, with all his valour and all his glory, did not disdain to make a traffic of his religion, continuing a Huguenot only till he had made it worth the while of Louis to bribe him to become a Catholic, and then selling his loyalty to his God for the Constable's sword. They, and all their contemporaries (with, perhaps, the single exception of Sully and his gallant son-in-law, De Rohan) were so utterly selfish and faithless in every part of their policy, that even while reprobating the cruelty, often combined with treachery, with which they were treated, one cannot feel pity for them, or contend that they deserved a better fate.

Richelieu, however, cared but little for their virtues or their vices; he thought only of their power, which was partly real, and partly depended on the weakness and fear of others; he determined to destroy it by crushing the chiefs, and spreading terror among the whole body; and it so happened that just at this moment events, of which he made dexterous use, afforded him the opportunity he desired of showing that no rank or eminence whatever could shield its possessor from the effects of his displeasure. Besides the king, Henry IV. had left a second son, Gaston, Duke d'Anjou. Louis had no good qualities except a certain degree of that kind of ability, or rather quickness, which is compatible with the most utter absence

of strength of mind or force of character; and Gaston was a second Louis without that scanty and valueless talent. He, too, could not exist without a favourite; such a term when used with reference to these two brothers, implying not the slightest regard or consideration for the persons so patronised, but only a sort of habit of yielding to their influence till death or disgrace removed them, when they were parted with without a single mark of sympathy, or even apparent recollection. Gaston was ready for any plot, and equally ready to abandon the plot, and to betray his associates. His chief favourite at this moment was Marshal Ornano, who, having been his tutor, owed his marshal's bâton to his influence; while Louis himself had several of about his own age, the chief of whom was the young Marquis de Chalais; and the king's and the duke's favourites began to plot against the minister, Chalais apparently thinking that he was the only obstacle to prevent his obtaining such influence as had been enjoyed by Luynes. The whole Court was filled with intrigues, the worst of them being those of Richelieu himself, who was at all times diligent in sowing jealousies among the different members of the royal family. His object apparently was that, by thus learning all their secrets, he might reduce them all to a state of dependence on himself, and so be able to carry out his own plans without interruption. He had succeeded in wholly alienating the king from his wife, Louis being actually afraid to show the fondness which at one time he was inclined to entertain of her, for fear of him;* and they were now so wholly separated, that there seemed no chance of their having a

* "Je sais d'un des favoris de ce Prince, inférieur en puissance au

family. It consequently became a matter of State importance that Gaston should marry; even during his father's lifetime, while he was but a child, a wife had been selected for him, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a princess of the blood royal, and of great wealth; and the queen-mother and Richelieu were still desirous to secure her for him; the cardinal being chiefly influenced by the fear that otherwise he might marry some foreign princess, and thus form a connexion which, in the event of his succeeding to the throne, might embarrass the policy of the kingdom. Other princesses, or those who had the disposal of them, were also eager for a match which might place them on the throne. The Princess of Condé, though her daughter was but a child, would gladly have seen the duke wait for her till she grew up; while the Duke of Savoy offered him his own grand-daughter, Marie de Gonzaga, who, like Mademoiselle de Montpensier, was the heiress of great possessions. But Louis, with a jealousy of his heir presumptive by no means uncommon, wished to prevent, or at least to postpone his brother's contracting any marriage whatever, and employed Ornano to dissuade him from any, which he did with such success that the duke formally refused Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Richelieu, disconcerted, and discerning the cause of his disappointment, compelled Louis to recall his instructions to the marshal, and to order him to persuade Gaston to change his mind; but

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Cardinal de Richelieu, mais qui néanmoins a eu assez de part dans l'inclinaison du Roi pour savoir ces petites particularités, que le Roi la trouvait belle, et qu'un jour lui faisant quelque confidence à l'avantage de sa beauté, il lui disait qu'il n'osait lui montrer de la tendresse de peur de déplaire à la Reine sa mère et au Cardinal, dont les conseils et les services lui étaient plus necessaires que de se plaire avec sa femme."—Madame de Motteville, i. 37.

Ornano was also under the influence of the Princess of Condé, and, though he promised obedience to the king, was in reality more solicitous to please his mistress, and to further her views for her own daughter. The cardinal, finding himself once more baffled, now insisted on Louis punishing his favourite, and, as he was able to suggest to him a similar trick to that which he had played off upon Condé and Vieuville, his Majesty made no objection. He invited the marshal to supper, where he loaded him with especial marks of regard, and the moment that Ornano quitted his presence, the captain of the guard arrested him; his brothers, and those most in his confidence, being seized at the same time.

Gaston was greatly offended, but at the same time greatly terrified. Richelieu, when questioned by him on the subject, boldly justified it on no other ground but his own will, but at the same time took the precaution of bribing the duke's servants; and the duke, feeling himself in his power, seemed ready to do whatever he ordered. But the ladies who were concerned to prevent the Montpensier marriage were not so easily to be turned from their purpose. The Duchess de Chevreuse, formerly wife of Luynes, and a most dissolute woman, was a friend of the Princess of Condé; and among her lovers she reckoned M. de Chalais. He was ready to do her bidding in any way, and a plan was soon concocted to deliver the duke from his perplexities by assassinating the cardinal. D'Anjou willingly consented, and even undertook to manage it. The Grand Prior of Vendôme, the second son of Henry IV. and Gabrielle, promised his assistance; and it was settled that the duke should invite himself to dinner with the cardinal, and take with him a

train sufficient to overpower the servants of the house, and to kill the master. The plot seemed sufficiently well laid; but the secret was not so well kept but that Richelieu got notice of it, and baffled it. At first no one knew the source of his information; but a day or two afterwards Chalais avowed to the queen that he himself had been the traitor, fearing that another of the conspirators would have betrayed them if he had not. So utterly was every principle of honour at this time banished from the Court, that no one seems to have thought the worse of him for making this avowal, nor did he himself feel that it disentitled him to future confidence, which in the same breath he solicited. Profligate in every respect, as a truthful historian must admit that the nobility of the land was during the whole of the seventeenth century, there is yet no transaction, nor series of transactions in it, which so completely shows its utter depravity as the unblushing shamelessness with which men avowed and placed on record their own dishonour. This and the next generation was especially an age of memoir writers. Courtiers, generals, statesmen, and dukes, even cardinals and fine ladies, published journals, and memoirs, and recollections in unsparing profusion; and while the whole company of authors and authoresses commemorate the most flagitious acts of debauchery and fraud, and treachery and cruelty, without a single condemning comment, the greater part of them also unreservedly record their own connivance in, or participation in, such transactions. The Duke de St. Simon and Madame de Motteville are nearly the only writers of the class who seem to have wished to be thought better than their neighbours. Lest any place, any moment, or any

occupation should be free from the prevailing taint, even cheating at cards in the king's palace became fashionable, till at last the very language became demoralised, and the word "honest" became synonymous with low-born,* as indicating a coarse homeliness of virtue to which no one of gentle birth or courtly manners could be expected to condescend.

But not even treachery to his associates could, in Richelieu's mind, atone for the crime of having for a moment harboured a thought against him. He had already deprived the Chancellor d'Aligre of the seals, for excusing himself from any previous knowledge of Ornano's arrest, though the assertion was entirely true; and he now prepared to take a revenge on Chalais himself, and on all the accomplices in the late plot, which should strike all but D'Anjou himself, sparing him, not perhaps so much because he did not dare to meddle with him, as because, from his base character, he could gain more by securing his dependence on himself. His first blows fell on the Grand Prior and his brother, the Duke de Vendôme; Louis again being made the chief agent in their seizure, nearly as they were related to himself. He invited them to hunt with him, but before daybreak they were seized in their beds by the officers of justice, and hurried off to confinement in the castle of Amboise. And when they were secured, the next step was to seize Chalais and put him to death, as a still more significant warning; while, to make the example the more striking, Richelieu created for his trial a special tribunal, composed in part of members of the council, and presided over by the new Chancellor, M. de Marillac, on whom, as

* Lemontey, "Sur l'Etablissement monarchique de Louis XIV.," quoted by Stephen.

owing his promotion to himself, he could thoroughly depend. The erection of this new court for the investigation of an offence which the existing tribunals were fully competent to try, caused general indignation; but the greater the impression that it made, the more did it answer the minister's purpose of striking terror. He had even the audacity to drag Queen Anne herself before it as a witness, affecting to believe that she had been privy to the plot; but knowing that, at all events, she had assisted in persuading Gaston to reject the hand of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and resolved thus to punish her for thwarting his wishes. Anne believed that his real object at this time, in concert with the queen-mother, was to induce Louis to divorce her and send her back to her own country. He subjected her to a most insulting examination, compelling Louis himself, who was occasionally present, to charge her with having conspired against his own life, that she might be at liberty to marry again; and when she threw back that charge with becoming indignation, he tried to convict her by the testimony of the prisoner, to whom he secretly offered his life if he would implicate her in the plot of which he was accused. But, base as Chalais was, he was not quite base enough for the cardinal's purposes; and his life was the forfeit. He was condemned to death, with all the additional penalties prescribed in cases of high treason, though no act or design of that kind had ever been imputed to him; and, though great interest was made to save him, all that Louis dared to do was to remit the more degrading portions of the execution. He was beheaded at Nantes in August. Ornano died in prison a few weeks afterwards, as, nearly three years later,

did the Grand Prior. His brother, the duke, remained in confinement till the celebrated day of Dupes, when Richelieu, as he was openly treating with the queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans, thought it might be for his interest to have one royal prince under obligations to him, and released him, though not without compelling him to purchase his liberty by the surrender of his government of Brittany.

Meantime, with an energy and capacity which were universal, he began further to increase the strength of the country by encouraging the formation of a fleet, and its commerce, on which the efficiency of a naval power ultimately depends, by establishing anew a company to traffic with India, appropriating Morbihan as its port, and encouraging the construction of a sufficient harbour at that place. And, as for all these objects he required money, he convened a fresh Assembly of Notables, selecting them from a lower class than it had been usual to invite: more, that is to say, from inferior members of the council and officers connected with the revenue than from the great nobles. It is not very clear what his object in convoking them was, since they had no power to grant money, or to make laws. But perhaps in his eyes the making before them, and subsequently publishing to the whole kingdom, a statement of the financial state of the kingdom, tended to place the nobles more on a level with the rest of the kingdom, by making all equal in information on those points. The Marquis d'Effiat had recently been made Minister of Finance, and he laid before the assembly a statement which showed the revenue to have greatly fallen off from the flourishing state in which Sully had left it only sixteen years before. Money was at that time little more than a

third of its present value; and the annual expenditure, which amounted to 50,000,000 of livres, was once more greatly in excess of the revenue. It would have been nearly equal to it had a fair share of the taxes reached the treasury; but the abuses which Sully had put an end to, had, since his time, revived in full force. Twenty-two thousand collectors were employed to collect the tax known as "la taille,"* which only produced 19,000,000 of livres; and, in passing through such a number of hands, above two-thirds of that sum were dissipated, and only 6,000,000 were available for the expenses of the State. The treasury was empty: a portion even of the next year's revenue had been anticipated, and the pay of the army was more than a twelvemonth in arrear. The only reduction of expenditure which the minister could devise being one which he made the assembly demand of him as such, the demolition of those fortresses which were not required for the defence of the frontier, the real inducement to this measure being the degree in which it would weaken the governors of the central provinces, and prevent them from hereafter becoming formidable to the Crown. At the same time, so general was the distress of the agricultural interest, (the commercial interest could hardly as yet be said to have any existence), that no new taxes could be imposed, and the only resource was to contract a considerable loan. All this was fully explained to the

* "La taille" was a species of property-tax imposed on the estimated value of a man's immovable property; but it was very unequally levied. Many cities were exempted from it; all the nobles (because in theory it was originally a payment in lieu of personal service in the field, which they were still supposed to render), and the clergy, apparently because such service could never have been claimed of them. It therefore fell almost exclusively on the middle and lower classes; on the *roturiers*.

assembly, and then the minister, on his own authority, negotiated the required loan.

Yet, desirable as such a condition of the finances made the continuance of peace, Richelieu now found himself dragged into a war against his will, and that with the very power with which, for the furtherance of his other designs, he most desired to continue at peace. James I. of England had been as unable to live except under the dominion of a favourite as Louis. Charles, though a very different character, being a prince of exemplary virtue and of considerable ability, had the same unfortunate weakness; and the Duke of Buckingham, who had long been paramount at the court of the father, retained the same mischievous influence at that of the son. In many points he resembled Luynes: in eminent personal beauty, in vanity, extravagance, and rapacity; but he was even less able, and infinitely more profligate. He was also more easily offended, and far more capricious. In passing through France in 1623 he had been presented to the queen, and had presumed to address her in the language of love. When sent to Paris to conduct the young Princess Henrietta Maria to England, he had repeated this conduct; and the part which two years before he had persuaded Charles to take against Rochelle had been principally dictated by a desire to find some pretext for again presenting himself to her notice. There had been some little unpleasantness between the two Courts shortly after the marriage which had been intended to unite them, owing to the imprudence of Henrietta, who was very young and headstrong; and, who, because she was now in a Protestant country, thought it necessary to make the greater parade of

her attachment to Popery. She had refused to partake of her husband's coronation, because she would not kneel before a heretic prelate; and, a few days afterwards, with a large retinue of priests, she had made an ostentatious pilgrimage to the graves of some Catholics who had perished at Tyburn in the reigns of Henry and Elizabeth; and Charles, highly alarmed at an act of folly which could hardly fail to awaken great indignation among his subjects, at once sent all her French servants back to France; but, as the treaty of marriage had expressly stipulated that she should be allowed to retain such about her person, Richelieu considered himself bound to remonstrate against their dismissal; and at the end of 1626 sent Bassompierre to England to procure at least a partial revocation of the order. Bassompierre succeeded; but Buckingham proposed to make out of his mission a pretext for paying another visit to the French Court, and gave him notice that the renewed treaty was to be concluded in Paris, and that he was himself to proceed to that capital for the purpose of signing it. Louis, however, was no stranger to the height to which the duke had ventured to raise his eyes, and though indifferent to the queen's feelings, thought himself bound to resent conduct which could only be looked on as an insult to both her and himself. He refused to receive him as an ambassador; and Buckingham, full of disappointed rage, instigated the Duke de Soubise, who was still in London, to rouse the Huguenots to a fresh outbreak, promising to send an English fleet to Rochelle to assist them.

Rochelle was at this time the general head-quarters not only of the Huguenots, but of all those who, on any account, were discontented with the Government. It

was a city of considerable wealth, well fortified both on the landward side and towards the sea, and had a warlike population of 40,000 citizens. Soubise, therefore, thought that it would be easy to rekindle the flames of rebellion there, if he could bring the Rochellois any such help as might seem to afford a reasonable prospect of success. He embraced the duke's offer with eagerness; and in July, 1627, without any previous declaration of war, an English fleet, with 16,000 men on board, suddenly appeared off Rochelle, and prepared to attack the Isle of Rhé. The Rochellois were very unwilling to co-operate with it. They had a reasonable fear of incurring the guilt of unprovoked rebellion. They had from the first no faith in Buckingham's military capacity; and when they saw that he completely mistook the proper points of attack, and wanted judgment and vigour to press the enemy sufficiently on the points which he did select, their distrust of him increased. Nevertheless, the Dowager Duchess de Rohan, the mother of Soubise, who was in Rochelle when the fleet arrived, at last wrought on the citizens, against their judgment, to connect themselves with what each, individually, felt to be a desperate enterprise; and Richelieu, to whom the prospect thus afforded him of having a fair pretence for crushing the Huguenot party, made amends for the disappointment of being wantonly dragged into a war with England, gladly received the intelligence that Rochelle was in rebellion.

At first the Duke d'Anjou was sent down to command the army, Louis being detained in Paris by illness; but by October he had recovered, his fondness for military operations revived, and he hastened to

the scene of action, accompanied by Richelieu, whose early education had been of a military kind, and who was conscious that such commanders were likely to lack energy, which he felt himself able to supply. He at once threw across reinforcements into the Isle of Rhé, where M. Thoiras was holding out a fort known as St. Martin with great resolution, though it was unfinished and incompletely armed. In the beginning of November, Buckingham raised the siege, and returned home, leaving guns, standards, and prisoners behind him; and Richelieu, anticipating a renewal of the attack the next year, and having been taught by experience that Rochelle could not be subdued while the approach to it by sea continued open, undertook a work designed at once to baffle foreign enemies and to place the city at his mercy. Along the whole front of the port he began to construct a vast wall, at its northern and southern ends resting on the mainland, and having only one small opening in the centre, which was commanded by small batteries. The work was commenced in November, 1627; and, in spite of a rather severe winter, was carried on with such ceaseless diligence, under the superintending eye of the cardinal himself, that before the return of spring a great portion of it was completed. A large boom floating in front rendered any attack upon its sea-face a work of difficulty and danger; and the forts at the landward ends were finished and armed with heavy guns; so that when, in May, 1628, the British fleet, under Lord Denbigh, the brother-in-law of Buckingham, returned to the attack, they found it unassailable, and returned without striking a blow, or even attempting to strike one. Still the Rochellois, though thus deprived of the succour on which they had

reckoned, held out with unsurpassed intrepidity. Just at the time when Louis first arrived in the camp they had elected a new mayor, named Guiton, who at first had refused the office; and, when overruled by the importunity of those who knew his worth and fitness, had only accepted it, laying a dagger on the table of the council-room in the town-hall, on condition of being allowed to use it against the first citizen who should speak of surrender, and of its being turned against himself if he should prove craven. His subsequent conduct proved that this had been no braggart boast. Though provisions soon began to fail, he held the town gallantly through the winter, repelling many an attack, and many a suggestion of the advantages which he might procure for himself by a surrender. With the retreat of the English fleet all hope of receiving supplies died away. Rich and delicate ladies could still for a short time procure scraps of horseflesh; but the mass of the population were reduced to feed on leather, on morsels thrown up by the sea, weeds growing in the waters, and other food still more loathsome Once more an English fleet was seen from the walls, not indeed under the command of Buckingham, who had been assassinated at Portsmouth while preparing to embark, but with Lord Lindsey for its admiral; but he could effect no more than Denbigh had found himself able to do three months before. He was a bold and ingenious man, and endeavoured to force his way through the boom by means very similar to those which nearly two centuries later Lord Cochrane employed in almost the same neighbourhood. He charged it with his ships in full sail; he sent down an explosion vessel loaded with 12,000 pounds of powder, but it exploded too

soon to have any effect; he brought up his whole fleet, and cannonaded the works with fruitless energy for the greater part of a day; but all his efforts were vain, and he was forced to retreat, and to leave the city to its fate. The Duke de Rohan, who for the last twelvemonth had been maintaining an equal but profitless struggle against the superior forces of Montmorenci and Condé in Languedoc, was unable to bring the city relief from that side. Scarcity was changed into famine; but Louis had no recollection of the example set by his father in the siege of Paris. In vain the Duchess de Rohan wrote to him to beg permission for herself, with her daughter and the ladies of her train, to quit the city. It was refused; and the starving wretches who, without any such negotiation, attempted to escape were driven back within the gates with rods; or hanged for having been in the rebellious city; or penned between the walls and the lines of the besiegers; while Louis, from an apartment which looked over the fosse, feasted his eyes on their agonies, and mocked their last moments with unkingly taunts. Sixteen thousand men, nearly half of the population, had died miserably, and still the spirit of Guiton was unsubdued. "There still remained men enough," he said, "to shut the gates;" and he boxed the ears of one of the judges who proposed to capitulate. The fanaticism of some of the Calvinist clergy, who announced that God was coming to their aid, assisted his heroism by inspiring the wretched citizens with further resolution. At last, on the 27th of October, the strength of the inhabitants gave way, and they sent deputies to the king's camp to treat for a capitulation. Even of the scantiest and most loathsome food they had not rations left for

more than three days. They obtained more favorable terms than they had expected. More than once in the last few months Richelieu had sent letters and messengers into the city to persuade them to surrender by the promise of clemency; and his present conduct did not belie those offers. It is probable that, still cherishing, above all things, the idea of humbling the House of Austria, he was unwilling by too unpardonable a severity to alienate those allies of Rochelle, the English Government and people, whose aid would be so important to him in that contest. The privileges of the city were, indeed, pronounced to be forfeited, its fortifications were razed, the citizens were forbidden to possess arms or ammunition of any kind, and the Catholic religion was formally re-established as the dominant religion in the city; but those who adhered to the Huguenot form were still to be allowed to practise their own religious rites without hindrance, and, on taking an oath never again to bear arms against the king, they were to receive a complete amnesty for all that was past.

The fall of Rochelle effectually broke the power of the Huguenots ever again to render themselves formidable; but it did not entirely terminate the religious war. De Rohan still maintained a stubborn resistance in Languedoc, at one time carrying his resolution never to submit so far that, though the King of Spain was the bitterest enemy both of France and Protestantism, he made a treaty with him, engaging, on condition of receiving large subsidies for his army and himself, to maintain an army of 14,000 men constantly on foot and in active service against the king; but he promised more than he could perform. The different Huguenot towns

and assemblies in the south were not free from mutual jealousies; and they not unreasonably distrusted his power to maintain his resistance successfully, now that all hope of support from their brethren in the west had vanished; and his fidelity to their cause, when it should come to pass that his personal ruin could only be averted by the desertion of it. Of those, therefore, who were already in arms many deserted. Fresh recruits were slack in coming in; and when, in the summer of 1629, Louis himself appeared against Privas, their principal stronghold in the province, he had but little difficulty in mastering it. He utterly destroyed it, with every circumstance of the most ferocious cruelty, confiscating all the property of all the inhabitants. Condé, D'Epernon, and the Duke d'Estrées, at the head of different divisions of the royal army, ravaged the whole province as if it had been an enemy's country, till at last De Rohan, finding himself utterly unable to arrest their progress, humbled his pride, and sent to the cardinal offers to treat for a submission. Richelieu, as at Rochelle, showed himself inclined to mercy, but resolute also, as he was justified in being, to prevent the possibility of any renewal of so dangerous a rebellion. He insisted on the total demolition of every fortification and stronghold in the possession of the Huguenots; and on that condition consented to forgive the past, and to allow them the free exercise of their religion for the future. De Rohan had no choice but to accept these terms, which, indeed, were more merciful than he could have anticipated; and, in accordance with them, peace was signed at Alais on the 28th of June. Montauban, which was not included in the

treaty, still held out for two months longer; but on the appearance of a royal army beneath its walls, it also submitted to the same conditions. Richelieu entered the town in triumph, saw the demolition of its ramparts commenced under his own eyes, himself celebrated mass in its principal church; and thus, at last, the religious wars of France, which had lasted for nearly three quarters of a century, were finally terminated: and, independently of the security which such a restoration of peace gave to the king's government at home, it also greatly increased his influence with foreign countries, who, naturally, were inclined to endeavour to undervalue his power so long as one considerable portion of his subjects remained in open rebellion, and he seemed unable to suppress it.

In the early part of the year Louis was engaged in other warlike operations, which, though on a still smaller scale, afforded Richelieu another opportunity for the display of military energy and promptitude, which is no unimportant talent in war; and for a still more striking exhibition of his force of will and dominion over his sovereign. At the end of 1627, Vincenzo II., the reigning Duke of Mantua, died, leaving as his undoubted male heir his cousin, the French Duke de Nevers. But the claims of De Nevers did not extend to the whole of Vincenzo's dominions; for the marquisate of Montserrat, being a female fief, descended to a nearer cousin of the late duke, Marie de Gonzaga, who was, however, married to Charles de Rethel, Nevers's son. But the Duke of Savoy and the King of Spain, alarmed at the prospect of one, who in part of his estates was a subject of France, being established in such power on

the other side of the Alps, prompted Cæsar, Duke of Guastalla, to set up a rival claim to Mantua. And Charles Emmanuel and the Spanish governor of Milan, Gonsalvo de Cordova, the inheritor of a glorious name, but, as it proved, of no part of his great ancestor's abilities, at once poured their troops into Montserrat, and Gonsalvo, at the head of a combined force, laid siege to Casal. Richelieu was taken by surprise; he was quite as much alive to the advantage which France would derive from having De Nevers established at Mantua as the Savoyard or the Spaniard; and he was resolved to support him if he should prove unable to maintain himself there by his own resources; but, though equally aware that those powers on the other side of the Alps which were jealous of France were likely to view the duke's establishment in his new territories with displeasure, he had reckoned on the Duke of Savoy thinking the introduction of the Spaniards into a town so near Turin as Casal still more dangerous to his interests, and had relied on this jealousy to prevent the two powers from acting in unison. He was right in his idea of what Charles Emmanuel would think desirable, but, unscrupulous as he himself was, he failed wholly to estimate the universality of that prince's faithlessness, or his confidence in his own power of intrigue. Charles Emmanuel forgot the proverb, that, though one man may be more crafty than another, he cannot be more crafty than all other men at once. And he not only reckoned on tricking Gonsalvo out of Casal after he should have taken it, but he also began to treat with Louis to abandon the Spaniards altogether, if he might be allowed to retain Lombardy when they were driven out; while at the same time he offered the

Spaniards to bar the passes of the Alps against the French, if the Spanish troops would take and make over to him the city of Genoa. It was not till a later period that this double treachery was discovered, but the duke's measures to carry it out failed in every point. An attempt which he made to render himself master of Genoa, by encouraging a conspiracy among some of the most desperate of the citizens to overpower the nobles, being discovered, drove the city at once to seek the protection of France; and his reliance on the Spanish troops for the reduction of Casal gave time for that town to be succoured by the French army, and resulted in the complete and immediate establishment of De Nevers in his inheritance.

Louis was delighted at the advancement of the rival pretensions to Mantua, as giving him an opportunity of resuming military operations in his own person; and the same consideration was not without its influence on the cardinal. But the queen-mother was impelled by more than one motive to oppose the scheme. She was jealous, not without reason, of anything which would keep her son under the influence of the minister and separate him from herself; and she was likewise, from religious bigotry, too much attached to the interests of Spain to be willing to see the expulsion of its armies from Italy. With these views she opposed the war altogether, and when she found it was decided on, she resisted still more strongly the king's engaging in it in person, as an enterprise dangerous to his health. Richelieu postponed the revenge which he resolved to take for this opposition, contenting himself for the moment with rendering her discomfiture conspicuous by the fulness with which he announced his own views, and made

public the king's adoption of them. In a conference with the king and her he read an elaborate memorial containing a full explanation of his immediate and eventual policy both at home and abroad. At home it was chiefly confined to a plan for the subjugation of the Huguenots in Languedoc, which, as we have already seen, was achieved in the course of the summer; for reducing the different Parliaments to a proper sense of duty and obedience, and for placing the revenue in a more healthy state by a resumption or repurchase of such portions of the royal domain as had been granted away without due regard to legal formalities or to constitutional rights, or had been farmed out at inadequate rentals; in other words, by a return to the system introduced by Sully thirty years before. The foreign policy which he sketched out was one of general moderation as respected foreign countries. The cardinal renounced all idea of extending the frontier of France, with the reservation, however, of some plan which he did not clearly explain, for acquiring Neufchatel and Strasbourg, and with a comprehension of Franche-Comté as within that frontier, though, as we have already seen, that great province was as yet no part of the kingdom. The avowal of the right of waging foreign wars without provocation, and with no other object but conquest, so openly announced in the next reign, was a flight beyond the daring but prudent cardinal. But to protect the weak against the strong, in other words, Holland and Italy against the House of Austria, was to be accounted a duty; and for that end alone did Richelieu profess to desire the acquisition or fortification of such places as would secure for the king's troops an entrance into the different countries which

might be imperilled by Spanish or Austrian invasion; and for the same reason did he now urge the king to apply himself to the encouragement of a powerful navy.

So far Louis might well recognise the farsighted wisdom and energy, tempered and guided by moderation, of his minister. It was, we should have supposed, less to be expected that he would listen with patience to the second part of the harangue, which had been so carefully prepared; for it was as unsparing an exposure of his own weaknesses and vices as ever censor or satirist ventured on to the most helpless culprit.* He admitted indeed that Louis was goodnatured, chaste, and brave; but he affirmed with equal plainness that he was hasty, irritable, and capricious; so distrustful of his ministers that he would allow them no power, though too indolent to give the necessary attention to affairs of state himself; so jealous of his own brother that he was always abusing him and all his friends, though conscious that all he said would be reported to them; and so suspicious of all the world that he could not behold two persons talking together without seeing cause of personal disquietude in their conference; ungrateful to those who had done him service, and discouraging to all who proposed to do one; more inclined to measures of severity than mercy, and to trust strangers more than his nearest relations or his most natural friends; and, if by chance he were induced to adopt any proper course of action, or to embark in any considerable enterprise, so inconstant that he was sure to abandon them before they were brought to a conclusion. If,

* "Mémoires de Richelieu," quoted by Sismondi.

as the lecturer has recorded in his memoirs, Louis listened to this remarkable lecture without betraying any unusual impatience, it is a signal proof of the completeness of the ascendancy which his strong-minded servant had already secured; and it must have been with his entire concurrence that he formally appointed his mother regent of the kingdom during his intended absence.

But Marie was not the only one of the royal family who viewed the king's departure for the army with displeasure. Gaston, who had lately been made Duke d'Orleans, had originally been appointed to the command, and he was by no means willing to descend to the post of lieutenant-general of the expedition; and, when he had accompanied it as far as Lyons, he threw up his post and returned to Paris, telling Bassompierre who was in attendance on the king, with two other marshals, Schomberg and Crequi, that there would be nothing for them to do, since the cardinal would undertake their duties and those of the king also.

Early in January, 1629, Louis set out for the campaign: a terrible pestilence was raging at Lyons which had already carried off nearly 40,000 persons, on which account he avoided that city. By the end of February he had reached the foot of the Alps; and on the first of March he crossed M. Genevre, Richelieu at every turn displaying new talents in the address with which he surmounted every obstacle, and provided everything necessary for the provisioning of the soldiers and the transport of the heavy artillery. Between Oulx and Susa, the first town in his dominions which lay in the path of the French army, Charles Emmanuel had constructed very strongly forti-

fied entrenchments, and had garrisoned them with upwards of 8000 men; but they did not delay the progress of Louis for a moment. Richelieu had inspired all with his own energy. It was to no purpose that the rocks on the southern side had been carefully scarped; some light companies scaled them, and turned the lines on that side, while the artillery attacked them in front: and after a short cannonade, a regiment of infantry carried the position by storm. The success was decisive of the campaign, for it was no longer possible to prevent the French from throwing reinforcements and supplies into Casal; and, what was far more important with reference to the future, the events of the day raised the character of the whole French army. As we have had occasion to mention before, while their cavalry, consisting of men of gentle birth, enjoyed the highest reputation, their infantry had of late been but lightly esteemed; but now it was seen to have quite equalled its mounted comrades in intrepidity and steadiness, and thus laid the foundations of the renown, which, extended as it was in the next generation, under Condé and Turenne, has never since been lost, and which a long series of victories over every nation but our own has abundantly confirmed, of being the best soldiery of continental Europe.

The year 1629, however, deserves rather to be called one of treaties than one of wars. We have mentioned the treaty of Alais. A week after the storming of his lines, Charles Emmanuel also made his peace at Susa, and Gonsalvo undertook that his sovereign should ratify the treaty. April saw a third concluded between France, Venice, Savoy, Mantua, and the Pope, for the maintenance of the independ-

ence of Italy; and the close of the same month beheld the signature of another of still greater importance between France and England; the only thing which, in the eyes of those unalterable enemies of the House of Austria, Venice and Holland, was wanting to secure its humiliation before the arms of France, and the elevation of that kingdom to the political headship of Europe.

It was, however, but a short-lived peace that bound Savoy and France. A couple of months afterwards an imperial army invaded the Grisons; the great general Spinola replaced Gonsalvo as governor of Milan; and, encouraged by these events, the faithless Duke of Savoy began to evade the fulfilment of the conditions which, in his first alarm at the French successes, he had gladly accepted. Richelieu prepared for the renewal of the war in the way most pleasing to himself. On the 21st of November the king issued an edict nominating him prime minister, (an office hitherto unknown). A few weeks afterwards he received the equally unprecedented appointment of "Lieutenant-General representing the person of the king," which gave him, while with the army, absolute authority to receive and send ambassadors, and to make any terms which he thought advisable with either the allies or the enemies of France. And the title of generalissimo was invented for him to mark the more clearly the superiority of his military rank to that of the marshals.* In this new character, in the last week of the year, he set out once more to cross the Alps, and to lead an army of nearly 40,000 men into Piedmont. He rode himself at the head of

* "Vie de Richelieu," i. 476.

his troops; and few would have supposed that it was a bishop and prince of the Church whom they beheld. On receiving his military appointment he had laid aside his priestly vestments; and now, as he led on his men, he appeared with cuirass of burnished steel, a plume like that of Henry IV. in his cap, with sword by his side, and pistols at his saddle-bow. Two mounted pages bore before him his gauntlets and steel-lined headpiece; two others led a splendidly caparisoned war-horse, which he would occasionally mount, and cause to curvet and caracole in the way in which chargers of that day were trained, to enable their riders to give the greater effect to their sword-blows, stimulating his troops to exert themselves to the utmost by this display of his own perfect accomplishment in all military exercises.* More than once as he advanced the Duke of Savoy endeavoured to arrest his progress by negotiations; but, though willing to treat, or at least to listen to proposals, the cardinal pushed on with vigour and with as much rapidity as the winter season would allow. Again in the first week of March he crossed Mount Genevre with 22,000 men, and entered Susa without opposition, but found Avigliana, on the road between that city and Turin, too strongly fortified for him to be able to take it without a siege; and, not being inclined to spare time for such an operation, he listened more willingly to the duke's overtures, making sure that he would end by submitting. He had some suspicion of what proved to be the fact, that, as before, the duke was treating with him and the Spaniards at the same time; and, thinking it fair to encounter trickery with trickery, he

* "Vie de Richelieu," i. 485: "Il fit cent fois voltiger son cheval devant l'armée se vantant tout haut de sçavoir quelque chose dans cet exercice."

laid a plan to seize him at a country seat near Rivoli, whither he had retired to give the negotiations he was carrying on a more peaceful and honest appearance. But his design was betrayed; and Charles Emmanuel, professing great indignation, at once joined Spinola. Richelieu, though disappointed, behaved with as prompt a vigour as if he had anticipated such a step. He at once attacked Pignerol, one of the strongest places at the foot of the Alps, and which, lying as it does between Mount Genevre and Monte Viso, secured his communications with France, and sent an express to Louis to beg him instantly to invade Savoy. Louis gladly undertook that share of the work, and in the middle of May, accompanied by Bassompierre, he led 10,000 men to Grenoble, where Richelieu, having left the army in Piedmont under the command of Marshal de la Force, joined him, and in less than a month they overran the whole duchy with the exception of the town of Montmélian.

But this success, which was one of greater brilliancy than real importance, was far more than counterbalanced by the destruction of Mantua. That city, though not then as impregnable as it has been rendered by modern art, had nevertheless defied all the first attacks of the imperial general, Collalto; but a pestilence had lately made terrible ravages among the population, carrying off 25,000, and spreading such dismay among the rest, that a party in the imperial interest took advantage of it to admit a division of Collalto's army within the gates. The duke himself had barely time to escape; and on all who remained behind him Collalto exercised a cruelty of which Italian history had certainly furnished no example since Bourbon sacked Rome. He abandoned the city, at that time with

scarcely a rival for the splendour of its palaces and the beauty and value of the treasures of art which they enshrined, to the fury of his soldiers. All the miseries which ferocity and rapacity and lust could inflict fell upon the miserable inhabitants; and at the end of three days, Mantua, though the birthplace of the reigning empress, Leonora, was almost destroyed. The fate of Mantua was a terrible omen of what was destined for Casal, if that place, which was still closely invested, should fall into the hands of its enemies; and, indeed, before that event, Richelieu had pressed Louis to send a second army into Piedmont to secure its safety; but, during his absence in the winter, Queen Marie had recovered a great portion of her ascendancy over the king, and her denunciations of the war and exhortations to terminate it were vigorously seconded by Marillac, the chancellor, who hoped to overthrow the cardinal's ministry, and to succeed to his power. Peace indeed seemed at all times to be within the king's reach, for the negotiations had never been entirely broken off, and now a treaty appeared more likely than ever to be concluded, as the pope, Urban VIII., offered his mediation between the contending parties; and it is to the character and subsequent history of the agent employed by his Holiness that this war of Mantua owes its interest in the eyes of posterity. It did indeed provide Richelieu with a successor, but not at the time, nor in the way the queen or the chancellor expected. The conduct of the mediation was ostensibly entrusted to the legate Pancirolo, but the real business fell on a young man in his train, Giulio Mazarini, or, to give his name at once its French termination, Mazarin, who, as the legate's internuncio, displayed an unwearied activity,

united with a fertility of resource and promptitude of decision, which made a great impression on Richelieu, and determined him to attach him, if possible, to the interests of France. It would seem probable that his own vigour of intellect and of character at the same time exerted their sway over the mind of one so well able to appreciate such qualities; or it may be that the internuncio already perceived that, of all those with whom he was now brought into contact, the cardinal could best further his own views of ambition; but it is certain that throughout the whole course of the negotiation he studied chiefly to recommend himself to Richelieu's favour and to promote his views. And the cardinal felt that he had need of support in his endeavours to procure an advantageous peace, since the undisguised eagerness for such a result which the queen-mother openly expressed on all occasions, encouraged the enemies of France to believe that, by hanging back, they might obtain it on their own terms.

Richelieu, however, never trusted to words only, when it was in his power to fortify them by acts; and, at the beginning of July, while he himself still remained with Louis in Savoy, he despatched the Duke de Montmorenci with 11,000 men to join and take the chief command of the army in Piedmont. The duke reached the Italian side of the Alps in the early part of July, but had hardly got clear of the defiles when the Prince de Piedmont, the eldest son of the Duke of Savoy, who had lately obtained strong reinforcements from the armies of Spinola and Collalto, fell upon his rearguard with superior numbers. A fierce battle ensued, but the French maintained the superiority which they had asserted in the preceding

year, and gave the young prince a decisive defeat, taking many prisoners and standards, and killing and wounding 1000 men. Montmorenci prosecuted his advantage with vigour, and, advancing to the southward, took Saluzzo, and thus made himself master of a fertile province admirably suited to supply his army. But the same pestilence which had thinned the inhabitants of Mantua now fell upon the French, and, attacking the troops which Montmorenci had brought with him more severely than those which had become in some degree habituated to the climate, reduced him to a state of inactivity. Death, from one cause or another, was making and preparing to make havoc in all ranks of both armies, but especially in that of the enemy. Before the end of July Charles Emmanuel died, as some said, of chagrin, because the subjugation of Savoy and the capture of Saluzzo by the French, and the atrocities committed at Mantua by the Imperialists, led him to fear that, instead of increasing his own authority and at the same time establishing the independence of Italy, he had only ruined himself to plant two foreign masters on the Italian soil.

His death seemed likely to further Richelieu's views of peace, since the Prince of Piedmont, who succeeded him under the name of Victor Amedée, had married a sister of King Louis, and might therefore be supposed more likely than his father to prefer and adhere to the French alliance; and to a certain extent this expectation was fulfilled, though his first movement was an attempt to check the continued progress of La Force's division by attacking it at Carignano. But again he was defeated, and in the middle of August a fresh division, under the command of Marshal Schomberg, took Avigliana; and, had not the French had a garri-

son in Casal which they were unable to relieve, and yet could not abandon without dishonour, the whole advantage of the campaign would have been on their side. But the siege of that fortress Spinola pressed with the greater pertinacity that he deemed his personal honour concerned in achieving one conquest equal to that of Mantua by Collalto; and when at last, on the 1st of September, the unwearied efforts of Mazarin had induced the different sovereigns and plenipotentiaries to agree to a truce, he caused it to be inserted as one of the conditions that the town should be surrendered to him, and the citadel also, if it were not relieved by the 31st of October. Before that day arrived he was dead, having been attacked by the prevailing fever, which carried him off on the 25th of September; but the Marquis of Santa Croce, who succeeded him in command of the Spanish army, showed himself equally eager to secure the prize for which Spinola had so long striven; while Schomberg and De la Force put forth all their exertions to save it.

Uniting their forces at Saluzzo in the middle of October, they marched straight upon Casal; but it only wanted five days of the appointed time for its surrender when they arrived in sight of the besiegers' lines. Both armies prepared for battle, but, while the first shots were being exchanged, a single horseman, waving on high a white handkerchief on the end of his riding staff, was seen galloping towards them; it was Mazarin, bringing the news that peace had been signed at Ratisbon, and orders to the generals on both sides to desist from hostilities. The peace left all parties very nearly in the condition in which they were when the war began; the chief loser was the emperor, who was now compelled to acknowledge

De Nevers as Duke of Mantua and Montserrat; and the chief gainer was the Duke of Savoy, whose territories were enlarged by the addition of Alba, Trino, and some portions of the territory of Montserrat which lay nearest to his Piedmontese dominions. France, too, made some permanent acquisitions to compensate her for the cost of the war. She eluded the stipulation which bound her to evacuate Casal, and Victor Amedée subsequently suffered her to retain both that fortress and Pignerol, such permission, as was generally believed, having been secured beforehand, and having furnished the secret reason which influenced Richelieu to consent to the duke's obtaining the portion of Montserrat already mentioned, the cardinal thus making the Duke of Mantua furnish the equivalent for the acquisitions made by Louis.

But while he was occupied with his military and diplomatic labours, his power was threatened with extinction by the dangerous illness of the king. It came on suddenly in the last week of September, while Louis was still at Lyons, baffling the skill of the physicians, and wholly deranging the plans of the minister, who had generally been careful to prevent, as far as possible, all private intercourse between him and his family, but who was now no longer able to keep him separate from them. Both the queens were at Lyons, and, though they had been previously divided by mutual jealousies, their common hatred of Richelieu, and the personal interest they both felt in removing him from his post, reconciled them. They watched the king's sick-bed with the tenderness which the sight of suffering generally awakens in their sex; and he, his own heart being somewhat softened by his agonies, which were great, and by his fear of

approaching death, was frequent in his expressions of affection for them, and of indignation against the minister who had so deceived him as to their dispositions. He persuaded them that, if he should recover, he would dismiss him the moment that the war in Italy was terminated. And those courtiers, both male and female, who were admitted to his presence, did their best to confirm him in his resolution by tales of the cardinal's arrogance and severity. Richelieu's information was too good for him to be long ignorant of what was going on. He, like the rest of the Court, almost despaired of the king's recovery, and he began to fear that his enemies, when they should have the whole power in their hands, would not be content with depriving him of his office, but would aim at his life also. So real was his alarm, that he contrived to send a message to the king to beg him to provide for his personal safety, and, at the suggestion of the Duke de St. Simon, the Master of the Horse, the king desired the Duke de Montmorenci, then Governor of Languedoc, in the event of his own death, to give the cardinal an asylum in his province. Montmorenci willingly undertook the charge, and, being admitted with Richelieu into the king's sick chamber, promised to protect him against all his enemies. Richelieu had previously sought the support of Bassompierre; but that marshal was connected rather with his enemies, and excused himself on the ground of having no such power as the request attributed to him. A few months afterwards when Bassompierre was thrown into the Bastille, it was thought that his real offence was the coldness he had shown to the minister on this occasion. But it was afterwards seen, when far harder measure was dealt to Montmorenci, that no recollec-

tion of past service was, in the cardinal's mind, suffered to atone for the slightest offence, if, indeed, the feeling of being under an obligation did not rather sharpen his desire to rid himself of any one whose presence, or even existence, reminded him of it.

Louis recovered; some internal abscesses, which had been the secret cause of his illness, burst, and relieved him; and by the end of October he was able to return to Paris. As far as Orleans he travelled by water up the Loire, the queen-mother and the cardinal both accompanying him; and the royal barge became a scene of singular and complicated manœuvring. Though Richelieu was jealous of all who had free access to Louis, he probably feared no one but Queen Marie; and accordingly his efforts to poison the king's mind against her were incessant; and, as he had but little difficulty in persuading him that his mother preferred the Duke d'Orleans, and desired to see that prince on the throne, he was not unsuccessful. The queen, on the other hand, used very similar arguments to set her son against the cardinal, insisting that he was anxious for his death, in order to raise the Count de Soissons to the throne, and to marry him to his own niece, Madame de Combalet. And the more these two were thus scheming to undermine each other, the more friendly and even cordial was their demeanour. He was often seen at her bedside on his knees, the common attitude of reverence for the courtiers of that day, and engaged in the most confidential conversation. And she was frequently heard to address him in terms of the tenderest endearment, as if the days of their old loves had come back to both of them. She, however, was fully determined that this friendship should last no longer than the journey, reckoning that, on their

arrival at Paris, the king would find himself surrounded not only with military chiefs and governors of provinces on whom he could rely for support in the event of the cardinal trying to avert his fall by exciting any disturbance, but with those also who were prepared to undertake the Government, and so to preserve Louis from the necessity of falling back upon Richelieu to save himself trouble.

In fact, though Louis had promised to discard his minister, he was beginning to shrink from the task, and more than once begged of his mother to release him from his engagement, or at least to suffer him to postpone its fulfilment for a few weeks. She saw that he could only be brought to perform it by being taken by surprise. On her return to Paris at the beginning of November, she took up her quarters at the Luxembourg, where the king each morning paid her a visit; and on the 10th of November, having given orders that no one else should be admitted, she availed herself of the opportunity to renew her demand for the instant dismissal of the cardinal. Louis remonstrated, and begged for some respite. He liked the cardinal scarcely better than she did; he was almost as much afraid of him; but he felt that he was of use to him; his very imperiousness and the degree in which he monopolised all the authority of the State were a relief to his own indolence. But Richelieu was out of sight, and Louis, with his usual weakness of disposition, was beginning to allow the importunities of one who was present to prevail, when, to the surprise of both, Richelieu entered the room. The guards in the antechamber had refused him admission by the principal entrance, on which he had gone round by a back way, and came in unannounced by another

door; just in time to hear some portions of the invective which the queen was pouring out against him. If Marie was disconcerted, it was only for a moment; as soon as she had time to reflect, she perceived that his arrival gave her an unusually favorable opportunity of rousing her son to instant action. Turning upon the cardinal, she redoubled her reproaches; it was in vain that he humbled himself before her with the most respectful remonstrances; at last he yielded before her violence, and entreated the king to let him retire, and appease the queen by passing the rest of his life in tranquillity and obscurity.* Glad to be so easily relieved from his embarrassment, Louis consented. Richelieu withdrew, to make instant preparations for flight to the frontier; and the king, weary and agitated, returned to Versailles.

Marie did not yet know her son. She had gained the victory; but, to prevent its being wrested from her, it was necessary that she should still for a while keep him in her sight, and guard against his being exposed to any counteracting influence. Had she accompanied him to Versailles, the power of the cardinal would have indeed been irrevocably terminated. But his fortune prevailed: she remained at the Luxembourg to receive the congratulations of the courtiers on her triumph; and it so happened that the person in attendance on the king was almost the only friend whom Richelieu had in the world, the Duke de St. Simon, who had already shown his goodwill towards him at Lyons, and who had now the opportunity of doing him a far more essential service. He had been present, the only witness, at the recent

* Siri, liv. ii. vol. i. p. 241.

interview, and, when he retired with Louis, he soon discovered that the king was greatly annoyed at the premature explosion which his mother had forced upon him, and that the very necessity, under which he had for a moment found himself, of acting decidedly and resolutely, had left him more undecided and irresolute than ever. St. Simon contrived to send word to Richelieu that there was still hope; and, on that hint, the cardinal resolved to make one more effort for himself, and followed the king to Versailles, as if to take a formal leave of his Majesty, and to complete the formal resignation of his offices. Almost at the same moment Marillac, the chancellor, arrived at the palace, hoping to receive the appointment as his successor, which, as was generally known, Louis had promised Marie to confer upon him. But Richelieu was beforehand with him. By the instrumentality of St. Simon he was admitted to a long secret conference with the king, and was afterwards publicly received to perform before the royal retinue the scene which had been rehearsed in private. The minister humbly besought permission to resign his post. The king condescendingly raised him from the ground, assured him of his entire confidence, and undertook to reconcile the queen-mother to his continuance in office. Marillac, instead of receiving the promotion which he expected, was at once deprived of the seals, arrested, and thrown into prison, where he remained till his death; and before evening Marie learnt that her morning's work was undone, and had had no other result but that of establishing her enemy's power more firmly than ever. The people of Paris, who in reality had been almost as eager as herself for the cardinal's disgrace, comforted themselves

under their disappointment with a jest; and, in allusion to the way in which she, Marillac, and the rest of her party had deluded themselves with the belief of their success, named the day which had witnessed these events the "Day of Dupes," by which it is always spoken of by contemporary writers.

Richelieu now prepared to revenge himself; but he did not as yet feel sufficiently secure in his position to do so instantly. He thought it best first to strengthen himself a little, and to endeavour to bind some of the chief nobles to his side by fresh favours. He released the Duke de Vendôme from the prison in which he had been confined nearly five years; he made Montmorenci and Thoiras marshals; and promised even greater promotion to some of the favourites of the Duke d'Orleans: a step which had nearly cost him his life, for, as he delayed to fulfil these engagements, the duke, one day in January, 1631, forced his way into his house at the head of a body of armed followers, and, after loading him with abuse, threatened him with instant death; and, though he presently recalled the threat, he defied his power, and, retiring to Orleans, where his authority was nearly supreme, he maintained himself there in an attitude of open hostility to him and to the Court. Richelieu saw this with the greatest uneasiness, because the duke's succession to the throne still seemed highly probable, so weak had his illness left the king, and so constantly were the physicians around him in fear of a relapse. At last, when another month had elapsed, he thought that he had again sufficiently riveted the chains of habit on Louis, to which he chiefly owed his influence, to venture to chastise all his enemies. At their head he placed the queen-mother. Since the "Day of Dupes"

they had had more than one interview, in which both had behaved with all their usual insincerity. She had condescended to protest to him that she had never desired to remove him from office; and he had prayed that he might die if he had ever entertained any proposal which could injure her, or if he had any feeling towards her except one of absolute devotion to her service.* However, by the end of February, he thought he could venture to throw off the mask; and, having artfully re-awakened Louis's jealousy of his whole family, as looking for his death, and as having already made arrangements that, in such an event, Queen Anne should marry his brother; he prevailed on him to separate himself for ever from his mother, whom Richelieu represented as the originator of all these intrigues which disquieted his government. The king and minister had just so much sense of what was due to propriety as to wish to throw a slight veil of concealment over their measures, by making the country rather than Paris the scene of them. Accordingly, in February the Court removed to Compiègne, whither both the queens accompanied it. But, on the 23rd, Louis quitted the palace at an early hour, leaving orders to his own queen to follow him to Senlis, and to his mother to remain at Compiègne, from which place, however, the next day he ordered her to remove to Moulins. At the same time he banished the Princess de Conti and most of her ladies to different parts of the kingdom; and Richelieu gratified his old grudge against Marshal Bassompierre by leaving orders also for his arrest and imprisonment in the Bastille.

* "Vie de Richelieu," i. 530.

Queen Marie, however, did not go to Moulins, fearing to remain within reach of the cardinal's power. She escaped by night from Compiègne, reached the Flemish frontier in safety, and took refuge with her aunt, the Infanta, at that time governor of the Netherlands. Here she remained in safety for several years,* during which she addressed her son with repeated entreaties that he would allow her to revisit France, and Richelieu with equally numerous assurances of her admiration for his talents and devotion to his interests; but, if ever the king felt the promptings of natural affection, they were easily overruled; and if the minister's ear was at times open to flattery, it was when those who offered it were not in a position to become formidable. He was exasperated by several attempts at his assassination, some of which he fancied he traced to Marie's partisans, and, under his dictation, Louis returned his mother the unvarying answer that his regard for the tranquillity of the kingdom forbade him to permit her to return. From Brussels, on the death of the Infanta, she repaired to England, to the Court of her son-in-law, Charles I.; when dissensions, the forerunners of the Great Rebellion, began to disquiet this country, and when the Papists began to be singled out as an especial mark for the ill-will of the populace, she returned to Holland; and from thence she proceeded to Cologne. While at Brussels and in London, she had been cheerfully supported by her royal kinsmen in those cities; but at Cologne she found all her resources cut off. Neither revenues nor allowance were permitted to reach her from France, and, to her son's great disgrace, (to his other unamiable qualities, Louis added avarice;)

* "Mémoires de Madame de Motteville," i. 60.

she was often in want of ordinary necessaries. After a sojourn of a few months at Cologne, chagrin and privation brought on a fever, of which she died in the summer of 1642, a few months before the deaths of the minister who had crushed, and of the son who had deserted her.

The Duke d'Orleans had quitted France even before Marie. He had fulfilled his threat of retiring to Orleans; but when Richelieu, eager to nip in the bud a movement which might easily become the germ of a fresh civil war, persuaded Louis to march in person against that city, Gaston, finding that none of the nobles would join him in hostilities against his brother, fled to the Court of the Duke of Lorraine. Richelieu issued a proclamation, declaring the companions of his flight guilty of treason, which, in spite of their remonstrance, he compelled the Parliament of Paris to register. He would perhaps more gladly have kept the duke out of France than the queen-mother; but his position as heir-presumptive to the crown rendered it necessary to be more cautious in his bearing towards him. More than once Gaston returned to France; more than once he fled from it; on every occasion and by every act contriving (it was the only talent he ever showed) to add to his infamy. Once, for a moment, he did rekindle the flames of civil war, only to betray those whom he had seduced to join him, to the wrath of the king and the axe of the executioner; more than once he leagued himself with the enemies of his country, and tried to bring on her the miseries of foreign invasion; but the chief events in his career will claim a separate mention hereafter.

With the other objects of his wrath the minister, now completely triumphant and supreme, had no need to

be cautious. Bassompierre had twice offended him; at Lyons, as we have already mentioned; and in the course of the week after the "Day of Dupes," by pleading a prior engagement when Richelieu invited him to dinner. He was warned by more than one friend that danger was preparing for him, and entreated to fly; but he refused to take a step which in his eyes would have been a confession of guilt, and, as such, an impeachment of his honour, and, declaring that he had never done the king anything but the most loyal service, he only so far availed himself of the warning as to take care that no one else should be compromised by anything that might be found among his papers. It is a curious characteristic of the times that this man, who had commanded armies, and had been more than once employed in important embassies, thought none of his papers of any consequence except a collection of above six thousand love letters. These he burnt, and calmly awaited his fate.* He was arrested, and thrown into the Bastille; a measure which would seem to have been extracted from Louis against his will, since he took the strange step of sending a message to the prisoner that he had been arrested for no offence, but only to prevent his being led into the commission of one. He promised him an early release; but, if he ever wished to keep his word, he was not allowed to do so. For nearly twelve years was this gallant officer, who had filled the highest military and diplomatic appointments with ability and uniform fidelity, and whose complete innocence had been thus acknowledged by his sovereign, left to languish in prison, till

* "Plus de six mille lettres d'amour que j'avais autrefois reçues de diverses femmes."—Journal de Bass., ii. 402.

death removed his oppressor, when his release was one of the earliest acts by which the new minister sought popularity.

His brother, Marshal Marillac, had a harder fate. He had been a confidant of the schemes of Queen Marie for the overthrow of the cardinal, and, being commander-in-chief of the army in Piedmont, he had undertaken to answer for the adhesion of that force to the new arrangement which was contemplated. Such an offence could only be atoned for by blood. The same day that witnessed his brother's arrest saw an order sent for his own. It was not, however, easy to find a pretext for bringing him to trial. A most rigorous examination of his papers only proved his entire loyalty and devotion to the king's service; and at last the minister was reduced to proceed against him on a charge of peculation, as having appropriated to his own use some portions of the money drawn from the treasury for the use of the army. There was probably some slight foundation for the charge, which might, indeed, have been brought against all who had held similar commands for many years. At all events it was one which, unless the accounts had been kept with a precision unknown in those days, it was almost impossible to disprove, and it was one which had never been supposed to be capital. But Richelieu, when determined to destroy a man, could make a law, and could make a tribunal. The Parliament of Paris, the only body who could legally try a prisoner of the marshal's rank, was too independent to be trusted; but he had just established a Parliament at Metz, composed of his own creatures, and he felt equally sure of the servility of the Parliament of Dijon. He formed them

into one court, and before them he impeached the marshal. To his dismay, he found he had overrated even their unscrupulousness. In the middle of the trial he dissolved the court, formed a new one out of the most abject and ferocious of its members, and appointed his own castle of Ruel as the place for their sittings. Yet so utterly did he fail to establish the marshal's guilt, that even this doubly-packed tribunal only brought in the verdict he required of them by the majority of a single vote. However, that was sufficient. He was convicted, condemned, and beheaded in the place of execution for ordinary criminals; and another and more striking warning than ever was thus given to the minister's foes of the danger of harbouring even the most secret hope or thought injurious to the maintenance of his authority. Similar sentences were passed against other nobles, the Duke d'Elbœuf, the Duke de Bellegarde, the Count de Moret (though the last was an acknowledged son of the king's father), and one or two more, for having joined the queen-mother, or the Duke d'Orleans, in their flight from the kingdom; and, though their persons were out of reach, their whole property was confiscated; while, to mark still more decisively the minister's resolution to hold himself above all law but such as was of his own making, he caused the king to summon a portion of the Parliament of Paris before him at Metz, and to reprimand them severely for having ventured to protest against the erection of fresh tribunals to invade their rights and privileges, and for having shown themselves disposed to spare some of the offenders whom Richelieu had arraigned before them. Some of the most refractory of the members were even detained at Metz, to learn, as the king said, from the soldiers how to

conduct themselves. With the army they would see that any remissness in the discharge of their duty, and, much more, the slightest wilful disobedience, was rigorously punished, and they might draw their own conclusions as to the impropriety, and danger to themselves, if they, the chief administrators of the law, should presume to disregard the orders of their sovereign, who was the head of the law.

CHAPTER VIII.

Richelieu could now again turn his attention to foreign politics, and resume his darling project of humbling the House of Austria. Germany was at this time in the middle of the Thirty Years War, to which the talents and efforts of the two great antagonists, Gustavus and Wallenstein, were now giving an interest which hardly attaches to its earlier or later events, and, in spite of his position as a prince of the Romish Church, Richelieu, without hesitation, threw the weight of France into the opposite scale, and not only made a treaty with Gustavus, by which he engaged to provide him with a large yearly subsidy, but also endeavoured to detach the Duke of Bavaria, the most powerful of the emperor's supporters, from his side. At the same time, he announced with a somewhat ostentatious inconsistency, that France, though neutral in the strife, had taken the German Catholics under her especial protection; and, to give a seeming effect to this declaration, he carried the king with him into Champagne, to take in person the command of an army of observation which he had formed in that province; and he compelled the Duke of Lorraine to sign a treaty binding him at all times to allow the French troops a free passage into Germany through his territories. The duke indemnified himself

for the force thus put upon him by marrying his sister to the Duke d'Orleans, a connexion to which Richelieu, as he well knew, had an extreme repugnance. The Duke of Lorraine had more than one plan for aggrandising himself, and Richelieu had more than one for crushing him. The duke, besides the connexion which he had just formed with the prince, who might at any moment become King of France, and whose eventual succession to the throne seemed inevitable, since Louis was now almost wholly separated from Queen Anne, was also hoping to obtain from the Emperor the place in the Electoral College lately rendered vacant by the forfeiture of the King of Bohemia; while Richelieu, not contented with the concessions which he had already extorted from him, in the summer of 1632 persuaded the king to invade his territories, though he had not only published no declaration of war, for which, indeed, he could have alleged no grounds, but though the recent treaty seemed to render any such proceeding incompatible with good faith. The duke was forced once more to submit, undertaking now to act as the king's ally on all occasions, and surrendering several fortresses as pledges for his fidelity to the engagement he entered into. But not even yet was the hostility of Richelieu satisfied. The next year he found two pretexts for a fresh attack upon the duke, because his sister had married the Duke d'Orleans, and because, of the battalions which he sent to join the French army in fulfilment of the conditions of the last treaty, the greater part deserted. Once more a French army invaded Lorraine; it invested Nancy, and the duke could only preserve his capital from capture by consenting to place it for four years in Louis's hands.

A garrison of six thousand Frenchmen was at once placed in that important city, and Richelieu hardly condescended to disguise his resolution never to withdraw them, but to make their occupation of the capital a handle to bring on the annexation of the whole province to his sovereign's dominions.

Meanwhile, the Duke d'Orleans was levying open war against his brother in the country over which he expected to be soon called to reign. In the summer of 1632 he had joined the Spanish army, with which Gonsalvo de Cordova was vainly preparing to defend the electorate of Trèves against the Swedes, and a strong contingent of French troops, whom Richelieu sent to their aid, under the Marshal d'Effiat. Finding that he was not wanted there, he borrowed some regiments of cavalry from the Spanish general, and marched towards Lorraine just at the moment of the first French invasion of that duchy. His aid must, in any case, have been useless; but it was also too late. And being thus disappointed in his hope of doing mischief to France there, he crossed over to Languedoc to persuade the Duke de Montmorenci to take up arms in his cause. Montmorenci was a gallant and accomplished man, of chivalrous bravery, but of no great military skill, and no political ability. He had no cause of discontent with either king or minister, both of whom, a year and a half before, had found him, as we have seen, the chief on whom they could most safely rely, and even since that time he had exerted himself, not unsuccessfully, to render acceptable to his province some new regulations by which D'Effiat, the present minister of finance, was labouring to establish an uniformity of taxation throughout the kingdom. But, as he called the Duke d'Orleans his friend, he seems

to have considered himself bound to stand by him in his quarrel; and, without reflection or hesitation, he at once began to raise troops, entered into conventions with the government of Madrid, and, at the beginning of August, formally raised the standard of war. It shows forcibly how great the power of the principal nobles still was, and how dangerous to the kingdom in general the influence which the governors of the different provinces wielded, that, though some of the chief cities, such as Toulouse, Narbonne, and Nismes, prudently calculating the chances of the struggle, maintained their allegiance to the king, the duke was nevertheless able, in a few weeks, to raise an army of nearly twenty thousand men, and to face the force which Richelieu sent against him with superior numbers. Richelieu was probably not displeased at an outbreak which had no chance of eventual success, and which afforded him one more plea for crushing what remained of the independence of the nobles; but he evidently had not expected that the duke would be so successful in his levies, since he contented himself with sending the Marshal de la Force with ten thousand men, and Marshal Schomberg with another division of seven thousand, to encounter him. Montmorenci detached the Duke d'Elbœuf to make head against La Force, while he himself, with the Duke d'Orleans, and the main body of his army, amounting to thirteen thousand men, marched to give battle to Schomberg. On the 1st of September he met him at Castelnaudary, and he must have foreseen the end of the struggle before he crossed arms with his enemy, when the prince, for whom he had committed himself to it, as shameless as he was worthless, told him he cared little for the result of the battle, since he should

always be able to make peace for himself and two of his friends. Montmorenci's comment to the other nobles who had joined him, was that he did not intend to be one of the two; neither, he felt assured, did any of them: but, however firm their own resolution, and their reliance on each other, they must all have plunged into the battle with heavy hearts, after such a warning that the prince, for whom they were about to fight, had already made up his mind to desert them at the first reverse. Never were armies more unequally matched in every respect. The difference between the skill of the generals was greater than even that between the numbers of their armies; and Montmorenci, who had shown but little knowledge of tactics in the arrangements which he made for the battle beforehand, in the moment of action forgot even the plans which he had decided on, and with the Count de Moret, the commander of his left wing, charged Schomberg's lines with a mere handful of cavalry, without waiting to see whether he was followed by the rest of his army. He was overpowered in a moment. Moret, fortunately for himself, was killed on the spot; but Montmorenci, after performing prodigies of valour, was taken alive, though severely wounded. The rout was complete; few of the rebels were slain, since but few resisted, but many were made prisoners. Gaston and his personal retainers fled, Schomberg prudently abstaining from pursuing one who as a captive would have been but an embarrassing trophy of his victory.

In one single point Gaston's judgment had been correct; he had no difficulty in making peace for himself, and one or two of the most worthless of his personal retinue, by the abandonment of the rest.

Several of the most distinguished among the prisoners had been executed immediately; but Montmorenci was removed to Toulouse for a formal trial. The king himself repaired to the city to overawe the judges by his presence, lest the great popularity of the prisoner in the province which he had so long governed should cause them to waver. But there was no need for such an unroyal interference; the duke's guilt was too notorious for any possibility of escape for his judges or for himself. He could only confess his crime, and request mercy on the ground of his sincere repentance. He was condemned. And though the greatest interest was exerted in his behalf by almost every one save the prince for whom he had sacrificed himself,* the king was inflexible; and the last descendant of the great house of Montmorenci, the most ancient on the proud roll of the French nobles, perished on the scaffold.

The suppression of this rebellion was the occasion for the bestowal of fresh honours on Richelieu himself. He had recently been created a duke and peer of France; and now the king added knighthood to his other titles, dubbing him a brother of the Order of the Saint Esprit. The new knight turned his attention with redoubled energy to his darling object of reducing the power of

* In relating these transactions I have chiefly followed Sismondi; but there is an unusual variation between different early accounts of them. The author of the "Vie de Richelieu" greatly diminishes the number of combatants at Castelnaudary, affirming that the duke's army amounted to but little more than 5000 men, and Schomberg's to 2200, which last statement seems quite incredible. Siri affirms that the Duke d'Orleans made great efforts to procure Montmorenci's pardon, "envoya, coup sur coup, plusieurs de ses gentilshommes demander cette grace, et fit toutes les instances imaginables pour l'obtenir" (i. 184); but, so far as I am aware, he is alone in his statement. He also affirms that Richelieu would have inclined to mercy had not the king been inflexible, an assertion more reconcileable with the king's character than with that of the minister.

the House of Austria, which the terrible blows lately dealt by Gustavus had been greatly weakening; but whose hopes had begun to revive with the death of that heroic monarch, who fell at Lutzen in the November of this year. It is not certain that Richelieu himself looked on his death as a calamity, for he is believed to have been jealous of his military renown; he undoubtedly had begun to fear that he was becoming too powerful, and, though he was willing to have an ally, he was not desirous that that ally should fill the more prominent place in the eyes of the world. But his removal made the assistance of France of more consequence than ever to the princes in arms against the emperor, and they were eager to purchase it by the very concessions which Richelieu had long been most desirous to obtain. His policy with regard to foreign countries had from the first included an extension of the frontier of France to the Rhine; and, in the autumn of 1634, when the defeat of the Swedes at Nordlingen compelled the confederates to retreat towards the centre of Germany, and, consequently, to abandon the conquests which Gustavus had made on the western side of the great river, they had voluntarily offered to give up to Louis Philipsburg, Brisach, in fact all Alsace, to be considered indeed, not as a French province, but as one under French protection, which, to a grasp as tenacious as that of Richelieu, was much the same thing. The minister accepted the offer joyfully; he had already laid his hands on a great part of Lorraine, having instituted a prosecution against the duke and his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, on a ridiculous charge of abduction, as having carried off the Duke d'Orleans, and married him to their sister without the permission of the king. The Parliament of Paris,

which, after a repetition of ineffectual struggles for its ancient privileges, had been at last terrified out of its independence by his violence, found any verdict and pronounced any sentence which he demanded; and not only declared the marriage invalid, but condemned the duke, the cardinal, and the princes to perpetual banishment as guilty of treason, and confiscated the duchy of Bar which the duke held immediately of the Crown. Before the conclusion of this mock trial the duke abdicated his sovereignty in favour of his brother, the cardinal; but that act only increased Richelieu's hold over the duchy; since, while the new duke, who, at the same time that he succeeded to the supreme power, had married his cousin Claude, was enjoying himself with his bride in the neighbourhood of Luneville, La Force surprised them both in the midst of their honeymoon, and carried them off to Nancy, where they were carefully watched.

But, before Richelieu proceeded to any acts of open hostility against the empire, he felt it necessary to bring the Duke d'Orleans back to his allegiance. On the defeat of Castelnaudary, he at once, as we have seen, made his submission to his brother; but in a few weeks he again fled from the kingdom, and took refuge in Flanders, where he once more opened communications with the Spanish officers, and, in the spring of 1633, signed a fresh treaty with the King of Spain, by which he bound himself, if war should arise between that country and France, to aid the Spanish armies with 1500 men. Meanwhile, his succession to the throne seemed daily to become more certain and more near; Louis was apparently falling into an incurably bad state of health, and he was still alienated from his wife. Nor could Richelieu him-

self look forward to a long life with any very sanguine confidence; his constitution had never been strong, and he had recently had more than one severe attack of illness, while his enemies, and they were numerous, had shown that they were not inclined to wait for the slow process of natural decay, but had formed plot after plot for his assassination; and, although as yet they had all been discovered, and those concerned in them had been put to death, the constant repetition of such conspiracies could not fail to excite and keep alive continual apprehensions in the breast of him who was their object. In such a state of affairs, it was manifestly unsafe to leave the heir to the crown among the enemies of the kingdom; and, by promises of an entire restoration to favour, and of pardon and promotion for Monsieur Puylaurens, who had adhered to him in all his treasons, and who is the only man for whom he seems ever to have felt even a passing attachment, he was easily won over to betray all his other associates, to reveal his and their plans, and to quit Brussels for St. Germain. He was received by the king with apparent cordiality. He at once began to earn his and the cardinal's confidence by the sincerity, or at least earnestness, with which he denounced his own mother, Queen Marie, who was still in the Netherlands, as the instigator of most of the plots for the murder of Richelieu, and the secret supporter and patroness of all the malcontents of every party in the country. The treatment reserved for Puylaurens is characteristic of both the duke and the minister. It had been agreed that he should marry Mademoiselle de Pont Chateau, a cousin of Richelieu. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and the bridegroom was made a duke and peer of France; but in less than three months Richelieu

arrested him, and threw him into a dungeon at Vincennes, where he was immured till he died, without his patron, Gaston, ever showing the slightest interest in his fate.

While these events were taking place, the war in Germany seemed at first sight to be taking a course less favourable to Richelieu's views, as many of the chief princes of the confederacy against the emperor were beginning to desert it. In the summer of 1635, two of the most powerful, the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburgh, weary of the war, and, since the battle of Nordlingen, despairing of eventual success, formally renounced the League, and concluded a treaty of peace with the emperor; and, as that sovereign began to show a willingness to grant the Protestants better terms than he had previously offered, there was a great probability of other potentates following their example, if they were not re-encouraged by the accession of some greater power to their tottering confederacy. And it so happened that, just as Richelieu had resolved on hostilities, those whom he designed to attack furnished him with a plausible pretext for war. At the beginning of 1635 the Spanish general Gallas took Philipsburg by surprise, and soon afterwards made himself master of Trèves itself, and of the person of the Archbishop Elector, whom he carried off in triumph to Antwerp. The archbishop implored the aid of France, under whose protection some of the towns which Gallas had reduced had been placed the year before; the French ambassadors, both at Brussels and Madrid, were instructed to demand his release, and, on receiving a refusal, Louis at once recalled his ambassadors, and at the end of May declared war against both Spain and the Empire.

His minister had already made formidable prepara-

tions for the war in which he now embarked by three treaties of alliance; one with the United States of Holland, whose support would be invaluable against the Spaniards in the Netherlands; another with Switzerland, Savoy, Mantua, and Parma, who would find the imperialist armies abundant occupation on their Italian frontier; and a third with Sweden, whose armies were still in the heart of Germany, and might again be, as they had been before, in a position to threaten Vienna itself; the alliance with this latter power being, besides its political importance, interesting from its attendant circumstances, since the statesmanlike Oxenstiern came himself to Paris to negotiate it. It is said that the two great ministers being thus brought face to face, conceived a great esteem for each other's character, and displayed it in ways which had a good deal of diplomatic significance; Richelieu often visiting the Swede at his hotel (a compliment he rarely paid to any one,) and Oxenstiern, though a Protestant, acquiescing in all the airs of superiority which Richelieu gave himself as a prince of the Church. Even without alliances France was now strong enough to carry on a war for a short time by its own resources. D'Effiat was a man of great financial talents, and he had placed the whole revenue of the kingdom on so sound a footing that, besides bearing its ordinary expenses, and, for a time, the extraordinary ones of war, it could furnish the subsidies which had been promised to the allies, without any necessity arising for increasing the burdens of the people, while above a hundred thousand men were under arms, with arsenals and magazines of all kinds sufficient for at least two campaigns. This grand force, the greatest which any European kingdom of modern times had as

yet seen, was now divided into four armies. Five and twenty thousand men, under the two marshals, Chatillon and Bréze, composed the army of the north, to cooperate with a force of equal amount from Holland. The Marshal de la Force, with whom Richelieu joined the Cardinal de la Valette, a son of the Duke d'Epernon, of whose military talents he at first conceived a high opinion, commanded the army of Germany, in which a younger brother of the Duke de Bouillon, afterwards known as the Great Turenne, was serving his first campaign. The third army was led by the Duke de Rohan into the Valtéline, to act with, and, at times, under the orders of Duke Bernard of Saxe Weimar. The fourth was entrusted to Marshal Crequi, who also was placed in some degree of subordination to the Duke of Savoy. The four made up a great force for one nation to be able to dispose of, and, if it failed to realize all the expectations that might have been entertained beforehand of its achievements, its comparative inefficiency can only be traced to Richelieu himself. It was caused partly by his suspicious temper, which prompted him not only to divide the command of each army, but also to select commanders for each who were known to be jealous of one another, and partly by his overweening opinion of the universality of his own genius and of his especial skill in war, which led him to dictate from his own cabinet the operations which each marshal was to undertake in the field.

The war into which he was now plunging France had already lasted seventeen years; it had overwhelmed with desolation and misery the whole of Germany, which as yet had been its principal scene, and it had so exhausted the resources of the combatants on both sides, that, had it not been for the

fresh fuel that was supplied by the accession of France to the Protestant side, it must have now come to an end. Its continuance for thirteen more years is owing solely to the wantonness of Richelieu's ambition, for the pretexts on which he justified the quarrel of France with the Empire were of the most flimsy kind; and he hardly cared to conceal that his real temptation was the opportunity which the distress of Germany, and the exhaustion of Spain from the prolonged troubles in the Netherlands presented to take advantage of the weakness of both in order to aggrandise France at their expense, and to display his own talents for the organization and conduct of war. Of Louis himself we need take no account; he had long become a mere puppet in the hands of his minister, who often employed him almost as a clerk to copy out despatches of his dictation, who took him to the army when he chose, directed his movements while there, and withdrew him when he thought fit. He guided him equally in his domestic relations; when his mother entreated permission to return to France, the letter in which he refused her request was but a copy from a draft laid before him by the cardinal; Richelieu alienated him from his wife, and, as we shall presently see, when Richelieu commanded, he became reconciled to her. He condescended even to try and alienate him from his mistresses; not, indeed, that he had any in the ordinary acceptation of the word, for the king's connections were entirely Platonic, and the proofs of attachment which Mademoiselle de Hautefort, and after her Mademoiselle La Fayette, received from her royal lover were confidences on the subjects of his own pains and ailments, and remedies, or on the exploits of his hounds; but Richelieu was jealous of even

so limited an intimacy. Undoubtedly, however, in thus plunging the nation into war the views of the minister coincided with the inclinations of the king, who, as we have seen, had from his earliest manhood a fondness for military details, who was never averse to the contemplation of human misery, and who had given abundant proof that, as long as there was suffering, he cared little whether his own subjects or foreigners were the sufferers.

Misery enough to his own subjects the war certainly did produce, but it cannot be said to have in any respect added to the reputation of the cardinal as a war minister, or, at first, of the French as a warlike nation. Chatillon and Bréze did indeed, by a great superiority of numbers, inflict a defeat, at Avain, on Prince Thomas of Savoy, who had taken service as a Spanish general; and the Duke de Rohan, though the force at his disposal was far smaller than those entrusted to his brother marshals, held the Valteline and the neighbouring passes of the Alps with complete success; occupying the different fortresses with sufficient garrisons, and by a series of brilliant operations in the field defeating the German and Spanish commanders, Fernamont and Serbelloni, in several decisive actions, till at last he cleared the Valteline of all opponents. But, after a time, as the war thickened on the northern frontier of France, Richelieu was unable to reinforce him as he required; and he was in consequence forced to evacuate the Valteline; he recrossed the Alps, joined the army of Duke Bernard of Saxe Weimar, and in 1638 was mortally wounded in an action between that general and Jean de Werth. With the single exception of his exploits and the victory of Avain, the only important advantage

gained by France or her allies during the rest of the cardinal's life was achieved by Duke Bernard, who was not a Frenchman, nor were his soldiers French troops, but Germans and Swedes. It was in the spring of 1638 that he was besieging a small town, named Rheinfeld, on the eastern side of the Rhine, when he was surprised by Jean de Werth, a soldier of fortune, and one of the most enterprising of the imperial generals, and driven from his trenches with heavy loss, that of the Duke de Rohan, to which we have already alluded, crowning the slaughter which took place. A few days afterwards he more than avenged himself. He learnt that his conqueror, with three other of the imperial commanders, at the head of their divisions, were all resting at Rheinfeld in fancied security after his repulse, and he conceived the idea that he might retaliate his own surprise on them with greater effect. He called in all his outlying divisions, and by a forced night-march reached and entered Rheinfeld before any one of them had the slightest suspicion that he was moving against them at all, or even that he was in any condition to move. The four divisions were routed in a moment, all their baggage, all their artillery, and all four of the generals fell into his hands, and, at Louis's express request, he sent Jean de Werth himself to Paris, where, by a scandalous abuse of the rights of victory and laws of war, he was thrown into a dungeon.

But while the chief part of the little glory thus gained accrued to foreigners, the disgrace of most of the disasters that were experienced fell upon the French themselves. In 1636, Condé, who was still governor of Burgundy, failed in an invasion of Franche-Comté, and his attempt was retaliated by the invasion of his

own province by the Duke of Lorraine; and the same year, 1638, which witnessed Bernard's decisive success was signalised by a fresh failure of Condé on the other side of the kingdom. He, with the Duke de la Valette and Sourdis, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, (Richelieu taking continual opportunities of appointing great ecclesiastical dignitaries to military commands,) had laid siege to Fontarabia, on the borders of Spain. His army was numerous; but the troops were under no discipline, and La Valette, who was the eldest son of the Duke d'Epernon, would not co-operate with the archbishop, because that prelate was an irreconcileable enemy of his father. The Admiral of Castille, who was the chief Spanish commander in the district of the Pyrenees, had fewer troops, but they were inspired with the old Spanish courage and inured to the old Spanish discipline. What was, perhaps, equally advantageous, he had no colleague. He attacked the French lines, forced them, and utterly routed the army before its generals had decided on what movements to adopt to resist him. Condé and Sourdis took refuge in the fleet which lay in the offing, and of which the archbishop was commander-in-chief; others fled across the Bidassoa, and in a few hours the whole army was driven ignominiously out of Spain.

A far more real disaster (for Condé had no military reputation to lose) had been inflicted on France on her northern frontier two years before. The Spanish commander in the Netherlands was the Cardinal Infante, as he was called, a younger brother of the Spanish monarch and of the French Queen Anne. He, with two strong divisions, one under Jean de Werth and the other under Piccolomini, in whom, since the death of Wallenstein, the Emperor

had reposed his chief confidence, in the summer of 1636, suddenly crossed the border. His numbers were too great for Marshal de Bréze, though he instantly summoned Condé and the Count de Soissons to his aid, to make head against. He took La Capelle, Catelet, and other towns of some military importance, without resistance. In fact, they were indefensible; for Richelieu had been too intent on delivering blows, to recollect the necessity of guarding himself against those which might be aimed at himself; and the fortifications of these places were mostly in ruins, their garrisons scanty and in want of supplies, their artillery worn out and unprovided with ammunition. He forced the passage of the Somme, and, pushing on, summoned Corbie, which was little more than fifty miles from Paris, and which, though garrisoned by sixteen hundred men, surrendered at once; and there seemed nothing to arrest the march of the enemy on the capital itself. Soissons seems to have done the best that was in his power, by breaking down the bridges over the Oise, and taking up a position behind that river; but the force at his disposal scarcely exceeded ten thousand men, while that of the invaders trebled that number. An universal terror seized the citizens of Paris. Numbers fled into the southern provinces; those who remained gave vent in no measured language to denunciations of the cardinal, whom they accused as the author of their danger. And report affirmed that he, for a while, was as much dismayed as any one, placing guards around his palace, and doubting whether he should trust his safety to them, or should join those who had quitted the city in their fright, till he was roused to more manly feelings by Mazarin, who, as

the Papal nuncio, had been for some time resident in Paris, and by a Capucin friar, known as Father Joseph,* in whom he placed great confidence, and whom he had employed in many of his negotiations. A still more striking proof of the greatness of his terror was to be found, according to general opinion, in the courtesy of his demeanour to those who approached him with advice, or with which he even solicited it, a thing which no one had ever heard him do before. But after a day or two he recovered his serenity, and began to make arrangements for repelling the invaders if they should appear, calling on the different corporate bodies, courts, and boards, and even on some of the sacred brotherhoods, to raise troops to form a garrison, and collecting arms and ammunition in all quarters. His call was strenuously responded to; the treasury, the customs, the city officers, even the Carthusian monks levied men, and furnished means of paying and provisioning them. The Parliament of Paris offered to support 2500; but as they endeavoured to found on their munificent offer a right to examine into the expenditure of their pecuniary contribution, it was rejected with great anger by the king, who summoned before him the presidents of the different chambers of which the whole body was made up, and with stern reproof bade them confine themselves to their legitimate business, and not to interfere with his duty of governing his kingdom.

The emergency which was thus provided for did not arise. The very completeness of the invaders' first success tended to limit it, and to save the capital. A great portion of the cavalry in the Spanish army

* "Vie de Richelieu," ii. 275.

consisted of soldiers of fortune, who, as soon as they had amassed any considerable booty, preferred returning home to secure it, and the Cardinal Infante then found his army rapidly melting away, while the French armies of the south and east were known to be hastening to the defence of Paris, and were strong enough to endanger his retreat, if it were long delayed. After remaining a few days at Corbie, the invaders retired, and the citizens of Paris breathed again. But so deep was their recollection of their alarm that the year in which they had been exposed to it was long known as the year of Corbie. As the Spaniards fell back towards the Flemish frontier, De Soissons, who had already moved in that direction, hung on their retreat; but when, as happened a few days afterwards, he was joined by divisions which came up from Holland and Franche-Comté, Richelieu sent him the Duke d'Orleans as a colleague in his command, thinking, according to his habitual policy, that their mutual jealousy, of which he was well aware, would prevent either from becoming dangerous to the government. He was nearly finding himself fatally deceived; for, however they might suspect one another, they hated him more, and united in a plot to assassinate him, which only failed through the fickleness of the duke, who hesitated to give the signal agreed upon to the assassins, who had already surrounded the cardinal and had him completely in their power. A week or two afterwards they revived the plot; and this time it would in all probability have been carried out, since the execution of it was undertaken by the Abbé de Gondi, afterwards so celebrated as the Cardinal de Retz, who was not of a disposition to let an enterprise of such a character be baulked, and his own safety risked, either by any superfluous

scruples of his own, or by the indecision of others.* Gaston's daughter was about to be christened, and Gondi engaged to stab the cardinal while he was holding the infant at the font. Luckily for Richelieu the baby was taken ill, and consequently the ceremony was deferred. But D'Orleans and Soissons, thinking that their design was or must become known, once more fled from Paris, and in a few weeks Gaston, as usual, separated his interests from those of his cousin, and made his peace with the king, while Soissons obtained leave to reside in a sort of honorable exile for four years at Sedan.

By the time that the war had lasted two years, it had become very difficult to find money to continue it. The funds at the command of the treasury were expended, and so completely were the resources of Richelieu's and D'Effiat's invention exhausted too, that the cardinal actually had recourse to an alchymist, named Boismailli, who professed to have discovered the philosopher's stone, and undertook to supply him by that means. He tried other methods, which were more successful, but which, if less ridiculous, were hardly less criminal. He turned numbers of public servants out of offices which they had purchased for life, and resold them. He practically repudiated portions of the public debt, seizing the money appropriated for the payment of the dividends. He persuaded provinces to purchase for large sums an exemption from having troops quartered on them; and as soon as he had got the money, he sent the soldiers among them to live at free quarters, and to pillage the population still further. And thus, by every contri-

* "Mémoires de De Retz," vol. i. 9.

vance of ingenuity and bad faith combined, he managed to keep up the armies nearest to the German and Flemish frontiers in a state of comparative efficiency.

He himself had no share in the privations which were becoming general. He had by this time amassed an enormous fortune, of which he was spending portions with the most insolent ostentation, and portions with princely liberality and judgment. He built a palace for himself, which outshone in extent and magnificence every edifice which at that time belonged to any potentate in Europe; then known as the Palais Cardinal, but since his day as the Palais Royal; for he had already presented the reversion of it after his own death to the king, on the sole condition that it should for ever be set apart for the residence of the reigning monarchs, or of the heir to the throne. But he also spent large sums for the promotion of education and learning. He founded the Academy, an admission among the members of which body is still the distinction most coveted by the most learned and accomplished men in the kingdom. He founded and endowed with a sufficient revenue a college at the Sorbonne for the education of youth; and he bestowed from his own purse pensions on men of ability, to enable them to devote their lives to the studies in which each was most calculated to shine. One of his pensioners has left behind him an immortal name: Pierre Corneille, the first of the great tragic writers of France, who, in the winter of the very year in which the Parisians had been inquiring with agitated curiosity the intelligence from Corbie, won them to forget their alarm and distresses by the production of the "Cid," still

perhaps the noblest specimen of tragedy which the French language affords.

The part of the war in which Spain was concerned was that which presents more events worthy of remark for subsequent generations than any other, inasmuch as it was against that country that French fleets first signalised themselves. In the middle ages, and as late as the reign of Louis XII., the French navy had been one of the first class; but during the long civil and religious wars it had been entirely neglected; and above a century had passed since it had had any reputation, it might almost be said any existence; but Richelieu, from the very beginning of his administration, had had the wisdom to see the importance of such a force, and by this time had collected one of such respectable strength that it was a match for any fleet but that of England. It consisted of forty-two large vessels, and he placed it under the command of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who, in the summer of 1638, desiring to co-operate with Condé, as has been already mentioned, in the siege of Fontarabia, anchored it off the mouth of the Bidassoa; and being attacked by a Spanish fleet of fifty ships* (there is no trustworthy record of the size of the vessels on either side), entirely defeated them, captured some, burnt others, and sank some transports, which had on board some picked regiments on their way to reinforce the besieged garrison; and the very next week Richelieu's nephew, the Marquis de Pontcourlay, with fifteen ships, defeated another Spanish fleet of about equal force in the Gulf of Genoa, destroying six vessels, which were twice as many as he lost.

* "Vie de Richelieu," ii. 336.

Another event which grew out of the connexion of the Spaniards with the war had a still more lasting effect. Richelieu, who for many years had laboured to sow dissensions between Louis and his queen, had apparently begun to think that she was less to be dreaded by him than the Duke d'Orleans, and that, provided that he could make it appear that her reconciliation with her husband was his work, and also that the continuation of her husband's goodwill towards her depended on his pleasure, it would be for his interest to re-establish them in harmony; and just at this time circumstances put her very much in his power. He discovered that Anne kept up a correspondence with her brothers, the King of Spain and the Cardinal Infante, and having arrested one of her confidential servants, and searched some apartments in the convent which she had been in the habit of frequenting, he found proofs that she had also written at times to the Spanish ambassador, and to other diplomatic agents, and had communicated information calculated to thwart some of his designs. There could be no doubt of the impropriety of such conduct, nor that in a person of inferior rank it might easily have been construed as treason; and the fearless implacability of the cardinal's character might well make her apprehend that he would push to the utmost the advantage which he had thus obtained over her. She seems to have believed that he desired to induce the king to divorce her, and to marry one of his own relations; but such was not his object. He compelled her to sign a confession that she had occasionally given her correspondents political intelligence (though the cases specified were of

no great moment), and that she had expressed wishes for the success of the Spanish arms and negotiations while Spain was at war with France; and having secured this document, he conducted her to the king, whom he had already prepared for a perfect reconciliation. The union became as complete as in the earlier days of their marriage; and at the beginning of the following year it was announced that the queen was in a condition which seemed to promise an heir to the monarchy. Sixteen years before a similar expectation had been disappointed by a fall which she had got in romping with Madame de Luynes and some of her ladies; but no such prospect had been afforded since; and the announcement was hailed with general joy. Even Louis, who had neither, even after their reunion, any real affection for her, nor, as far as can be perceived, any concern for the interests of his kingdom after his own death, felt a certain sort of satisfaction, and showed it in a way significantly illustrative of his imbecile and superstitious character. One of those who knew him best has described his fits of devotion as arising not so much from a love of God as from a fear of the devil; and he now solemnly placed himself and his kingdom under the protection of the Virgin Mary. On the 9th of the following September the queen gave birth to a son; and when the hopes that had been anxiously entertained thus proved to be fully realised, the exultation was universal and sincere. Nor was it unnatural; for even his most intimate associates could not rely with certainty on deriving any advantage from the reign of one so fickle and treacherous as the Duke d'Orleans; and the wiser and honester portion of the public might well dread

for themselves and the kingdom at large the accession of one so utterly destitute of every talent and every virtue.

Meanwhile the war went on with as little honour or advantage to France as in previous years; yet, though it was evident that it was taxing to the utmost the capabilities and resources of the kingdom, Richelieu risked adding to the number of its enemies by offering wanton provocation to Charles of England, in spite of the nearness of the connection which bound that prince to his own sovereign. In the winter of 1638, Queen Marie had sought refuge at the Court of her son-in-law, who had received her with kingly hospitality, allotting her a palace for her residence, and a magnificent income for her support.* Richelieu professed to look upon such a reception of one who had been driven from the French Court as an open slight to his master; and, to avenge it, he opened negotiations with the Covenanters in Scotland, who were preparing to take up arms for the Presbyterian form of religion, which they had adopted, and sent them large sums of money to assist them in their meditated insurrection. But Charles's Government was soon too seriously occupied with its difficulties at home to take notice of this insult; and Richelieu was contented with having thus shown his displeasure, without seeking to carry his enmity further; but against Queen Marie herself he became more and more implacable. She behaved with conciliatory prudence; and, though her palace became almost inevitably the head-quarters of all discontented Frenchmen who fled from the cardinal's power,

* It was fixed at one hundred pounds a day, an enormous sum at that time.

gave him no open pretext for complaining of her conduct, but rather endeavoured to appear as a mediator between her son and his enemies, tendering her good offices with the emperor, with whom also she was nearly connected. Her entreaties to be allowed to return to France made some impression on the king, who at times declared that he would have willingly consented to her request, had he been able to prevail on the cardinal; but he, to cut off all hope of such indulgence, treated the mere fact of holding any communication with her as an offence. Because, after the repulse of Condé from Fontarabia, the Duke de Valette had retired to London, and had appeared as one of her Court, he brought an accusation against the duke in his absence, as having been the chief cause of the military failure in the Pyrenees, and appointed a special commission, of which the king, the cardinal himself, and M. Seguier, the chancellor, were members, to try him on this charge. Once more the Parliament of Paris remonstrated against such a measure, claiming for themselves the sole right of trying a defendant of the duke's rank, and received a reproof, which, if the principle which it laid down had been adopted in other cases, would have gone near to extinguish their authority even as a court of justice: the king declaring his indignation in the most violent terms, and telling them that those who asserted that he had not the power to prosecute any of his subjects who might offend him before any tribunal which he might choose, were unworthy of their office as councillors of Parliament; thus putting forward pretensions which went far beyond those claimed by the most absolute monarchs, who have usually been contented, at least in theory, with the unlimited power

of making the laws by their sole authority, and have left, or professed to leave, their administration and execution to the ordinary courts and officers of justice. But the whole transaction in every part was a mere mockery, calculated to degrade the law. La Valette, being absent, could make no defence. It does not even appear whether he received any due notice of the proceedings thus taken against him; but, without being heard, he was condemned; and as, luckily for him, he continued out of the cardinal's reach, he was executed three times over in effigy: once at Paris, once at Bordeaux, and once at Bayonne.

And, as if this rebuke and assertion of his prerogative might seem insufficient, as elicited by, and therefore perhaps limited to, a particular occasion, Louis shortly afterwards held a Bed of Justice, at which he re-asserted the pretensions which he had thus advanced in the broadest and most general manner, compelling the Parliament to register as an ordinance a declaration which he brought down to them, in which he affirmed the absolute authority of the monarch, and the unhesitating recognition of it by his subjects, to be the one thing needful for the preservation of kingdoms. It was, he said, the only bond of union between the different parties in the State which could permanently be relied on; it was the sole trustworthy foundation of the grandeur and happiness of a people. He traced the troubles of the kingdom in the time of the League and of his own minority to a general ignorance of this principle, and especially to the attempts of Parliament to encroach upon the authority of the sovereign; and the re-establishment of order and prosperity of late years to the firmness

with which, since he had grown up, he had re-established that authority in all its rightful power; and he expressed his resolution now to enact such laws as should render it impossible hereafter for any body of men to bring the royal authority and prerogatives into question. Among these laws was one expressly limiting the privileges of the Parliament to the administration of justice; and another, with equal clearness and positiveness of expression, forbidding the slightest interference on their part with politics, State affairs, or matters of Government. As a general rule, they were to consider themselves bound to register every royal ordinance without question or delay. Matters of finance were the only ones on which they might tender advice or suggest doubts; but, if their advice or suggestions were disregarded, they were to beware of repeating them, but were to register the edicts without another word. To impress these doctrines more deeply on his audience, the king proceeded to deprive of their seats some of the members who on some previous occasions had displayed a spirit of resistance; and this severity had its desired effect on the rest, if we may judge from the speech in which Omer Talon, the Deputy Advocate-General, replied, on behalf of the Parliament, to the royal lecture. M. Talon assured his Majesty that they were all very greatly frightened at his indignation; but, recollecting that the Hebrew theology represented God as never appearing unto men without first filling them with astonishment and fear, they hoped that he, the image of God on the earth, would also be generous to them, and would diminish in some degree the rigour of his determination.

In 1639 Richelieu lost, what at the time seemed his

best chance of carrying on the war with success, or of bringing it to an honorable termination, by the death of Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, the only officer, with the exception of the Duke de Rohan, who, as we have seen, was also dead, who had shown any military talent on that side. He had been negotiating with the cardinal, who was eager to attach him more entirely to the French service, when he caught a fever, which had already carried off many of his men, and which proved fatal to himself. By a lavish expenditure of money in bribing the chief officers, and the promise of unprecedentedly high pay to the whole of the duke's army, Richelieu succeeded in retaining the men; but the Duke de Longueville, whom he appointed to the command, wanted the abilities which had hitherto rendered it formidable. He however, in the course of 1640, was obliged to resign the command through ill-health, and was succeeded in it by the Count de Guebriant, who in skill and energy more nearly resembled Duke Bernard, and who, in 1641, with only one division of the force, gained a brilliant victory over Piccolomini at Urlfenbrettel; and the next year gave another imperialist army, under Lamboi, a still more decisive defeat at Kempten in Bavaria, in which he made prisoners of the commander-in-chief himself, with General Menz, almost the whole of the staff, and nearly five thousand soldiers; captured also all their artillery and baggage; and earned a marshal's bâton for himself.

But events more important in their bearing on the ultimate issue of the war, as far as France was concerned, and on the subsequent history of the nation, were taking place in Piedmont. Victor Amedée had lately died, and his son Charles Em-

manuel being a child, his mother Christine (Madame Royale, as she is often called by the French historians, as being the eldest daughter of Henry IV.), governed that country as regent. Her husband's brothers, of whom the elder, Maurice, was a cardinal, and the younger, Thomas, Prince of Carignan, as we have already had occasion to mention, was an officer of considerable ability, tried to wrest the regency from her; and she, being harassed by their opposition, and also feeling unequal to the conduct of a war, desired to preserve a neutrality between the rival powers. But Richelieu, in spite of her relationship to his own sovereign, had no indulgence for her distress, and compelled her to enter into strict alliance with France, by a threat of instant invasion if she refused; and also to admit a French regiment into the citadel of Turin, to preserve it from the attempts of her brothers-in-law. This precaution was not taken too soon, for those princes, who were closely leagued with Spain and the emperor, and who had a strong party among the citizens of the capital, in the summer of 1639 made themselves masters of all the city, with the exception of the citadel, which became the sole refuge for the duchess and the infant duke. After a short time she gave up her other chief fortresses to the French, and retreated into Savoy, and thus left her whole dominions beyond the Alps as the battle-field for the combatants, both of whom were almost equally severe to herself. The Cardinal de la Valette, whom Richelieu first sent to take the command in Piedmont, died in the autumn of 1639. Every army seemed to carry disease along with it which proved as fatal to the generals as to the common soldiers. And Richelieu replaced the cardinal

by the Count d'Harcourt, a younger brother of the House of Lorraine. With all his eminent qualities for government, Richelieu seems generally to have been deficient as a judge of the character and abilities of men, and especially to have failed in his discernment of military capacity. But on the present occasion he was either more sagacious or more fortunate than usual, for Harcourt proved a general of unusual skill and energy. The army which was under his command, not exceeding nine thousand men, was far inferior in numbers to those with which Prince Thomas and the Spanish Marquis de Leganez were threatening the most important towns, and blocking up the roads to them, in the hope of reducing them by famine. Yet with this comparatively scanty force he undertook the relief of Casal, which a long siege had reduced to the greatest extremity, defeated their united battalions at the bridge of La Rotta, which crosses one of the arms of the Po above Turin, and placed Casal for the time out of danger. His brief campaign earned him a high reputation among the commanders of his day. But what gave it its especial consequence in the eyes of the next generation was that in it Turenne, who held a subaltern command in his army, had his first opportunity of displaying his extraordinary talent for war, which, perhaps, no general among his countrymen, till the time of Napoleon, ever quite equalled. The next year they had to repeat their achievement, when Leganez renewed the siege with twenty thousand men and a powerful train of artillery. He himself had received scarcely any reinforcements, and had not more than half the numbers of the Spaniards; but Casal was too important a fortress to be abandoned. With his ten thousand

troops he at once marched again to its succour; and, before the besiegers knew that he was in motion, he suddenly attacked their lines on three points at once. The struggle was desperate; the great superiority in numbers of the Spaniards giving them an advantage which more than counterbalanced the circumstance of their being taken by surprise. But Harcourt himself, and Turenne, who commanded in the centre, displayed not only consummate skill in handling their men, but the most splendid personal bravery and prowess; and at last they entirely routed the enemy, who fled, leaving behind them two thousand prisoners, all their artillery and baggage, and a well-furnished military chest.

In the north Richelieu made more sure of success; and, in that confidence, he persuaded the king to assume the command of the army of Picardy, amounting to forty thousand men, with the Marshals De Chatillon, De Chaulnes, and De la Meilleraye as officers of his personal staff. But the campaigns in that district were of an unimportant and somewhat chequered character. In 1639, Louis took Hesdin; but shortly before Piccolomini cut the Marquis de Feuquieres and a division under his orders to pieces at Thionville; and in 1640 the whole summer was occupied with the siege of Arras, the capture of which was owing at last more to the dilatoriness of the Cardinal Infante than to the skill of the French marshals.

The army on the Spanish frontier was also one from which important success was expected; but these expectations were frustrated by the want of judgment displayed by Richelieu in the selection of the general. Because Condé's son, the Duke d'Enghien, was about

to marry his niece, he appointed the prince to command this army, consisting of above twenty thousand men; and marked out the conquest of Roussillon as the object of his campaign. But Condé spent the whole year in reducing the small fortress of Salses; in losing it again, and in making an ineffectual attempt to recapture it; and he would have returned to France covered with disgrace instead of credit, the French troops being wholly driven out of the country, if the very Catalonians who had retaken Salses and were holding it successfully against him, had not suddenly broken out into revolt, and sought the aid of France to enable them to resist their own sovereign. They had been driven to this step partly by the arrogance of Olivarés, the Prime Minister of Philip IV., who took every occasion to decry, and to threaten the abolition of their distinctive privileges, and partly by the exactions of the king's generals, who, while Catalonia was then the seat of war, claimed a right for their troops to live at free quarters in the province, and oppressed the inhabitants with great rapacity and cruelty. At first the discontent showed itself in numerous isolated acts of personal vengeance; peasants who had suffered outrage waylaying and murdering the soldiers who had wronged them; but when the army, exasperated at this not unnatural retaliation, proceeded to acts of further violence, and such as especially outraged the religious feelings of the people, burning, not only villages, but churches, the whole population rose up; and on the 7th of June, the day of the yearly festival of the Holy Sacrament, which in those days was celebrated with peculiar solemnity at Barcelona, the chief city of the province, they broke out into open insurrection; murdered the

Count de Santa Colonna, the viceroy of the province, and expelled the king's garrison. Other towns, such as Lerida, Tortosa, and Balaguer, followed the example of the metropolis, and sent an envoy to Paris to implore the support of France. Richelieu gladly agreed to furnish the help of which they stood in need, and signed a treaty with the chiefs of the province; and sought to justify to the world his patronage of rebellious citizens by a pedantic proclamation in which he claimed Catalonia as belonging of right to his own sovereign, because it had formerly made a part of the dominions of Charlemagne. It was more to the purpose that he appointed M. de la Mothe Houdancourt, who had borne an honorable share in Harcourt's Italian campaigns, to command the army which he sent to the assistance of the insurgents, though he in some degree neutralised the skill of that excellent officer by giving him his favourite Archbishop Sourdis for a coadjutor, as commander of the fleet. M. Sourdis had no quality of a soldier but insolence; and his incapacity disconcerted many of the general's best conceived operations. Properly understood, the revolt of Catalonia was a most unfortunate event for France as well as for Spain: since it kept alive the war between the two countries long after peace was established over the rest of the Continent, and tended to aggravate, if it did not even cause, more than one of the rebellions which, in the course of the next few years, distracted France itself. During the remainder of the present reign, however, it produced no events of any remarkable military importance. The French held the towns which the insurgents had put into their hands; but failed, chiefly through the unskilfulness of Sourdis, in reducing Tarragona, or in

extending their grasp upon the province. And Philip's government was too fully occupied on the western side of the Peninsula, where Portugal also had revolted, and was making vigorous and successful efforts to re-establish its independence under the sovereignty of the family of Braganza, to be able to spare men to drive the French from the small space of territory which they were holding.

Meanwhile the discontent which the war had given birth to in France was rapidly increasing; and began to explode in fresh insurrections, rebellions, and conspiracies, though these had not all any connection with the war. Among the peasantry, in every part of the kingdom, the distress had become almost intolerable. Each year the strictness with which the different taxes were levied became more and more rigorous; the collectors seized the crops, and even the household furniture of those who were in arrear, often threw them into prison, and often even compelled the neighbours or fellow-parishioners of a defaulter to make up the payment which they had been unable to extort from himself. No province had suffered more in this way than Normandy: the destitution was great, and the inability of a great part of the people to meet the requisitions made upon them was so apparent that at last the Parliament of Rouen, and even the Court of Excise established in that city, came to their relief, released those who had been imprisoned, and enjoined the collectors to show more forbearance for the future. But such lenity was little to the taste of the cardinal, and of the royal council. They praised the collectors, and annulled the measures intended to curb or remedy their rigour. And the

wretched peasantry, maddened by their present sufferings, and deprived of all hope for the future, broke out into revolt, gave themselves the name of the "Barefoots,"* and seizing Avranches, fortified themselves in that town with barricades in the vain hope of extorting by this attitude of resistance a mercy which was denied to their orderly entreaties.

But the Government was now far too strong to be alarmed by a local outbreak. At the same time it was possible that the example might be contagious; and that, if this rising were not promptly repressed, the spirit which prompted it might spread to other provinces. But Richelieu was not contented with acting with vigour. His arm descended on the insurgents and on the whole province with a relentless ferocity which has left on his memory, and on that of his instrument, a Colonel Gassion, as deep a stain as any other transaction in his career. He at once sent Gassion with a small force against Avranches. The insurgents defended themselves with bravery; if it were said with despair, such an expression would only indicate a feeling which the event showed they might well have entertained. They could make no head against disciplined troops. Their barricades were easily forced; and the soldiers had orders to give no quarter. The few wounded who fell into Gassion's hands, he instantly hung. Of the rest every one was slaughtered. Avranches itself was committed to the flames; and before night not one single individual of the insurgents was left alive, and scarcely a fragment of the town which had been the scene of their resistance. Nor was the minister contented to limit his

* "Va nu-pieds."

revenge to a single town. His wrath extended to Rouen, as the city where the Parliament, by its indulgence to the defaulters, had seemed to reprove his severity, and to the whole province. The Parliament of Normandy was suppressed. Those who had endeavoured to mitigate the distress which had caused the late outbreak were deprived of their offices. A new tribunal was established to try all who were supposed to have favoured it, which condemned to death, often by torture, nearly all who were brought before it. A fine of above a million of livres was imposed on the city; and the whole province was deprived of the protection of the laws, and made to depend solely on the absolute and unlimited will of the king.*

Another outbreak might have been fraught with greater danger to the State had it not been cut short by a singular accident. It has been already mentioned that the Count de Soissons, after the failure of the plots for the assassination of the cardinal in which he had engaged with the Duke d'Orleans, had been allowed to retire to Sedan; but it was only for a limited time that he had obtained permission to reside there, and Richelieu now desired to recall him to France; for at that time it was an established point of law that the king had a right to the continued personal attendance of all chief nobles of the land, if he chose to require it. And we have seen that, in many instances, the mere act of withdrawing from the kingdom to England or Holland was treated as a crime. It would have been wiser to have left the count where

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* "Il (le Chancelier Seguier) ajouta que la province serait désormais gouvernée par la volonté du roi, absolue, sans limites, et qu'il lui suffisait de notifier."—Sismondi, p. viii. c. 19.

he was; though, if the minister had had the power to select a place for his retirement, he could have chosen none more unfit than Sedan; since it was not only near the frontier, but the Duke de Bouillon, to whom it belonged, had at all times regarded the cardinal with but little goodwill, and was especially exasperated against him at this moment because he had recently exacted from him considerable sums on one pretence and another, with the real object, as the duke believed, of compelling him to sell his principality of Sedan to the king. The sentiments of these two nobles being pretty generally known, it was not strange that all the malcontents in France looked to them as likely to be leaders in any plot which promised the overthrow of the minister who was the object of their common detestation; and among others, the Abbé Gondi, whom we have already mentioned, and whom we shall have frequent occasion to mention more prominently hereafter, took a very principal part in their deliberations. He was a man of very eminent talents of a peculiar kind, ready, fearless, supple, shrewd in discerning the disposition and abilities of those with, or against whom he had to act, and utterly unscrupulous. His ecclesiastical profession did not prevent his being one of the most dissolute of men; almost before he had grown to man's estate he was a notorious and successful duellist; and, though remarkable for his ugliness, no lay noble surpassed him in the triumphs of gallantry, or in the number of his mistresses. If we may compare Richelieu (with some important variations) to our own Strafford, De Retz presents an equally strong resemblance to Shaftesbury. Though a very young man, he had already pushed himself into some celebrity,

and he was now taken into the councils of those who were thinking of a conspiracy without any very definite knowledge of the objects for which they were to conspire, or of the means by which they were to attain them. He formed no very favorable opinion of their prospects of success. He did not rate the talents of the Duke de Bouillon very highly; those of the Count de Soissons he estimated still lower, and abated something of even that valuation when he found that he changed his plans five times in two days.* Still he felt himself born for conspiracies: when only eighteen years old he had compiled an account of the conspiracy of Fiesco against Doria, which had attracted so much of Richelieu's notice as to make him pronounce the author a dangerous person;† and he was eager to become one of the chief actors in some such transaction. He undertook, while the chief leaders were operating in their country, to manage that portion of the outbreak which was to be conducted in the capital, to raise the Parisians, and to make himself master of the Bastille, where Bassompierre and Marshal Vitry, and many other men of almost equal character and influence were still confined, whose aid, by restoring them to liberty, he hoped to secure. The better to ensure success, Soissons and Bouillon concluded a treaty with the emperor and the King of Spain, who, eager to countenance any enterprise which promised to distract France, engaged to furnish them with

* "Je demeurai encore deux jours à Sedan, durant les quels M. le Comte changea cinq fois de résolution, et St. Ibalt me confessa à deux reprises differentes, qu'il était difficile rien espérer d'un homme de cette humeur."—De Retz, i. 36.

† "L'Histoire de la Conjuration de Jean Louis de Fiesque . . . aiant été portée a M. le Cardinal de Richelieu . . . il dit tout haut, en présence du Maréchal d'Estrées, 'voilà un dangereux esprit.'"—Ibid.

several thousand troops to support their meditated revolt, and they likewise entered into an arrangement with the French refugees in England to make a diversion in their favour by crossing over to Brittany; but, by one piece of mismanagement and another, the greater part of these plans came to nothing, and what was to have been a civil war, breaking out at once in every quarter, was reduced in the end to an invasion of Champagne by a force which scarcely amounted to ten thousand men. Marshal de Chatillon was in that district with an army slightly superior in numbers; he was an officer of some scientific and professional knowledge, but of no energy; and of his troops a large portion had but little inclination for a war, success in which was, as they thought, of more importance to the cardinal, whom they hated, than to the king or the kingdom at large. The two armies met on the banks of the Meuse, on a small plain between that river and the wood of La Marfeé, from which the battle which ensued has taken its name. It had hardly commenced when the king's troops were seized with a real or pretended panic. They were utterly routed, leaving nearly half their number prisoners: their artillery, baggage, and military chest all fell into the hands of the conquerors, and the victory would have been in all probability productive of important results, had it not been neutralized by the death of the Count de Soissons. He was killed by an accidental discharge of his own pistol, and his death broke up the confederacy. De Bouillon made his peace on condition of abandoning his alliance with Spain; and the conspirators in Paris itself, who had been waiting for the success of the army as a signal to commence their share of the undertaking, congratu-

lated themselves on having committed no overt act which could give the Government any pretext for suspecting their loyalty.

The foreign war still went on, but still the only quarter in which the French added to their military reputation was Piedmont, where alone Richelieu had hoped to terminate it. After his second relief of Casal, which has been already mentioned, Harcourt laid siege to the city of Turin, which was still occupied by the Prince de Carignan with a strong force of civic militia, though the citadel was held by a French garrison. The citizens being thus placed as it were between two fires, were soon reduced to a state of extreme privation. It was in vain that Leganez, calling in all his divisions, came to their help, and, posting his army outside of the French lines, tried to hem the besiegers in in a similar manner. The days of Parma and Don John were gone; the Spaniards had relapsed into their national slowness of movement, and Leganez was the slowest of the Spaniards. While Harcourt held his position firmly, Turenne, by a succession of brilliant and rapid manœuvres, passed in and out through the Spanish divisions before they could ascertain the direction of his movements, or suspected that he was in motion at all; he brought in reinforcements, he brought in supplies, and at last, after a siege of nearly five months, Prince Thomas surrendered, and Richelieu, who formed a more accurate judgment of the talents of his enemies than of his own countrymen, endeavoured to gain him over to the French service. The prince was well inclined to accept his offers; jealousies had sprung up between him and Leganez, whom he suspected of wishing not so much to save Turin as to make his own sovereign

master of it; and at last he signed a formal agreement to quit the Spanish service, and to join the cardinal at Paris. But he found himself unable to fulfil his engagements except at the cost of a too heavy sacrifice. His wife and children were at Madrid, and Olivarés, suspecting his intention, refused to let them join him; and, as Philip consented to recall Leganez, the chief reason of his discontent was removed. He renounced the treaty he had made with Richelieu, and renewed his connections with the new Spanish general, the Count de Sincela. But they were unable to make head against the superior genius of Harcourt and his lieutenant, who, in the last campaign of 1641, overran almost the whole of the country, Harcourt crowning his achievements by the capture of Cuneo, a fortress of the highest military importance as commanding the communications between Turin and Nice, and also of the greatest strength. It was well garrisoned and well supplied, and the allied generals made great exertions to relieve it; but Harcourt baffled all their efforts, and, after eight weeks' siege, took it before their eyes. Nearly at the same time, the French made an acquisition on the coast of almost equal value, when the Duke of Monaco, unable to endure the insolence of the Spaniards, renounced the alliance which had subsisted between them and his ancestors for a hundred years, sought the friendship of Louis, and admitted a French division into his city.

The career of both king and minister was drawing to an end. But they were not to close it in tranquillity; though the last attack by which the Government was threatened came from a more unworthy source than any former danger. The last conspirator against the life and authority of the minister was

neither queen nor a prince of the blood, nor a great territorial noble, but a youth of neither experience, abilities, or influence of any kind, except such as he had acquired from the personal favour of the feeble-minded king himself. In one point Louis resembled that contemptible prince who, during the first years of his reign, sat upon the throne of England. He could not live without some favourite; and as Richelieu, with all his faults, devoted the greater part of his attention to measures of large policy, which he believed indispensable to the welfare of the State, he had no time to spare for the petty trifling of a courtier's life. For many years the favourites, as we have already mentioned, were of the gentler sex, and the diversion which they afforded to his Majesty was generally understood to be such as might have been more appropriately administered by ladies who had passed the first flush of youth and beauty. They were expected to act as conversational nurses. But latterly the cardinal had begun to suspect that they mingled discussions on politics with those on medicine; that they talked of the pulse of the nation as well as of that of Louis; and that, as they were all partisans of Queen Anne, who, in spite of her reconciliation with her husband, hated his minister as keenly as ever, the representations of his own character, and of the general feeling of the people towards him, which they urged upon the king, were unfavorable to the duration of his own power. He felt that, if he wished to continue minister, it was not wise to continue to disregard such influences, and he sought a remedy in superseding the ladies by a favourite of another class. Personal beauty had first recommended Carr and Villiers to King James; and

among the youth in the French capital was one of similar attractions, Henri de Cinq Mars, a younger son of the Superintendent of the Finances, Marshal d'Effiat. Richelieu placed him in the palace as Master of the Wardrobe, and Louis, having his attention thus attracted, fell into the snare laid for him, and soon began to lavish on his new officer marks of favour which outran even the minister's anticipations. He dismissed Mademoiselle de Hautefort from the Court, and though Cinq Mars was not yet twenty years of age, he raised him to the rank of marquis, and sanctioned his purchasing the place of Master of the Horse. After a time he scarcely ever allowed him to quit his sight, and spoke of him and to him only as his "dear friend." For a while Cinq Mars contented himself with profiting by his position to amass riches; but, though he was wholly without talent of any kind, the extraordinary favour which he enjoyed presently bred in him thoughts of ambition. He looked upon himself as at least equal in capacity to the Marshals d'Ancre or Luynes; and, remembering the power which those favourites had enjoyed in the earlier years of the reign, he began to covet similar authority for himself. He found it easy to govern a king, had no suspicion that it was harder to govern a kingdom, and thought the existence of Richelieu the only obstacle to his undertaking the task. He was the more confirmed in this opinion when he found that the cardinal had become jealous of him, and had taken umbrage at his being constantly present at his conferences with Louis on affairs of state. At last Richelieu even sent him an imperious message, to remind him that he was not a member of the royal council, and therefore to forbid his appearance at

their deliberations; and Cinq Mars, frantic with mortified self-importance, at once began to meditate vengeance, which in those days meant assassination. There was no lack of allies willing to share in such an enterprise. The Duke de Bouillon listened to his project; the Duke d'Orleans entered into it with eagerness; but neither thought that it could succeed without the help of Spain. To secure the assistance of King Philip, D'Orleans sent M. de Fontrailles, the officer of his household in whom he had the greatest confidence, to Madrid, where, however, he found Olivarés very unwilling to agree to the conditions which he was authorised to propose. It was in vain that he tried to tempt the Spaniard by the prospect of the assistance of France, when under a new administration, to suppress the revolt of Catalonia, which she was now supporting. Olivarés distrusted the power of De Bouillon, if D'Orleans should desert him; still more did he refuse to place confidence in the steadiness or good faith of D'Orleans; and it was not till Fontrailles revealed the secret that Cinq Mars, whose absolute dominion over Louis was now universally known, was a chief mover in the conspiracy, that he consented to sign a treaty binding him to give the dukes the assistance which was required of him.

It was a somewhat singular coincidence that, just at this time Richelieu, who had no suspicion of the machinations which were thus being set on foot for his destruction, had resolved to make the vigorous prosecution of the war on the Spanish frontier the chief object of his efforts; and with that view, at the beginning of 1642, he persuaded Louis to move to the south, to assume in person the com-

mand of the army destined for the reduction of Roussillon, and the occupation of Catalonia, which he hoped to annex permanently to France; while, to enable him to strengthen the king's army, he had given the Duke de Bouillon the command in Italy, and transferred Harcourt to Picardy, hoping that his genius would compensate for the weakness of the army of which he gave him the command in that province. He was requiring impossibilities; for the Spanish army on the frontier doubled Harcourt's, and a general of great enterprise and skill, Don Francisco de Mello, had lately been placed at its head. By threatening him on both sides of his province, Don Francisco compelled him to divide his army; and when Harcourt himself had moved to the northern coast to defend Ardres and Calais, the Spaniard fell upon the Count de Guiche, who with the right wing was endeavouring to fortify a position at Hennecourt, and cut his division to pieces.

The army now collected on the north-eastern frontier of Spain amounted to nineteen thousand men. Under the king were the Marshals de Meilleraye and de Bréze, both related to or connected with the cardinal, and for his lieutenant-general De la Meilleraye had Turenne. To oppose this force Olivarés could only rely on a few squadrons of cavalry, not amounting to more than three thousand men, under the Marquis de Povar, and on the garrisons of the different towns on the frontiers, which were manifestly unable to offer any adequate resistance. La Mothe Houdancourt with infinitely superior numbers fell upon Povar, routed his troops, and took the marquis prisoner. La Meilleraye took Collioure and invested Perpignan, which, being completely isolated, had no means whatever of maintaining

a long defence. Louis himself, though very ill, took the greatest interest in the operations of the siege, even writing out with his own hand such accounts of the operations as he wished to appear in the gazettes; but before the place surrendered, both he and Richelieu were forced by ill-health to leave the army, and withdraw to the banks of the Rhone, in the hope of deriving benefit from some medicinal springs in the neighbourhood of Tarascon. The cardinal went first, and while Louis, who was following him, was resting at Narbonne, he suddenly received from his minister a complete account of the conspiracy into which his brother and his favourite had entered, with an accurate copy of the treaty which they had concluded with Spain, and which proved that they had stipulated not only for enormous pensions for themselves, as the price of their treason, but also for the invasion of their country by a foreign army. Cinq Mars was, as usual, with the king, who had already begun to be weary of him. So entirely had his head been turned by his prosperity that he had become insolent, not only to the rest of the courtiers, but even to Louis himself. He condemned the minister's policy, the skill of the marshals, opened the despatches which came for the king without his sanction, and spoke of a change in the government as depending rather on his own determination than on the king's will. If Louis subsequently told the truth, he even indicated, with no very great obscurity, the means by which he intended to bring about that change. Louis found out that his favourite was as imperious and presuming as his minister, while he also felt that the violence of language of the one, which made him nervous, was a very different thing from the force of character of the

other, to which, in spite of himself, he could not help deferring; and he was therefore quite in the humour to get rid of him on the first pretext that should offer itself. The despatch from Richelieu would have made such a step necessary had he been ever so little prepared for it, and he now acted on it with a promptitude which showed his eagerness to rid himself of his "dear friend." He instantly caused him to be seized, issued orders at the same time for the arrest of De Bouillon and of a gentleman named De Thou, the son of the celebrated historian, who had taken an active part in the arrangement of the earlier steps of the conspiracy, though he had refused to be accessory to the assassination of the cardinal, and had not been aware of the negotiations with Spain till after the treaty was signed. The Duke d'Orleans was not arrested. Richelieu felt that he could not proceed to his condemnation, and he knew his baseness well enough to be sure that he could make him more useful by leaving him at liberty. In fact, in spite of the readiness which he had at all times shown to set himself above the law, and to make law, lawyers, and tribunals subservient to his purposes, he had need of Gaston as a witness. It did not suit him to reveal, what to this day has never been known, how he obtained the copy of the treaty with Spain which he sent to the king. A vague general notion that plans unfriendly to himself were in agitation he might easily have acquired; for the secret had been so ill kept that it had become the common talk of Paris, and Fontrailles, who was as deeply committed as any one, had warned Cinq Mars of his danger; had urged him to fly; and, when he could not prevail, had announced his resolution to provide for his own

safety, telling the favourite that, as he was a fine well-grown young man, he might think he could afford to be shortened by a head, but that, as he himself was short and thick-set, such an operation would spoil his appearance altogether.

Richelieu therefore wanted witnesses to enable him to give legal proof of the guilt of the criminals; and a very brief play upon the cowardice and treachery of the Duke d'Orleans sufficed to ensure his being just such a witness as was required. He was easily brought to deliver a written testimony, betraying all his accomplices, and relating the whole rise and progress of the conspiracy; he even endeavoured to implicate persons who, as far as we know, were undoubtedly innocent, such as the Duke de Vendôme and his sons, the Duke de Mercœur and the Duke de Beaufort, apparently merely because he thought them likely to be objects of suspicion to the cardinal. His evidence, in itself sufficient, was laid before the court which, at the beginning of September, assembled at Lyons to try the conspirators; but their condemnation was further ensured by the voluntary testimony of a witness of still higher rank. Louis himself addressed a letter to the Parliament, affirming that the conduct of Cinq Mars had for some months been such as to compel him to watch him narrowly; and that he had actually suggested to him the assassination of the cardinal, and had offered to undertake it himself. And his Majesty condescended to add to this astounding statement a series of elaborate arguments to show that he himself could not have approved of the proposal, since, if he had favoured it, there would have been no occasion for the treaty with Spain. The prisoners were brought to trial at the

beginning of September. The proofs of their guilt were irrefragable, nor did they themselves deny it; though De Thou pleaded, as some mitigation of his own crime, that it had been limited to a concealment of a design to which in its more atrocious parts he had never consented. They were convicted, and condemned. De Bouillon was spared to the entreaties of Mazarin, who was greatly attached to his brother Turenne, on condition of surrendering his rights over Sedan as an independent prince. Cinq Mars and De Thou were executed the evening that the sentence was pronounced, De Thou behaving like a philosopher, and Cinq Mars bearing himself with a dignity which could neither have been expected from his age nor from his past life, and which seemed to show a nobleness of spirit, which a better education might have led to a worthier career. He had been tempted to his ruin by the unreasoning partiality of his sovereign. How treacherous was the light that lured him to his destruction may be seen by the following anecdote, too indicative of the king's character to be passed over without mention. For two years he had been the daily, hourly companion of his master, the chosen depository of all his confidences, anxieties, and hopes, his "dear friend." He had undoubtedly been guilty of treason; but though De Bouillon, who had been equally guilty, was pardoned, Louis had no forgiveness for him, and the only remark he was known to make on the subject was made at the very hour of his death. To watch from some secret place the agonized countenances of those about to suffer had been a favourite pastime of the king; and, in the evening on which Cinq Mars was to expiate his crime, Louis recollected the fatal hour, and reminded his attendant

courtiers of what was taking place by the comment that "about this time our dear friend must be cutting an awkward figure."*

The detestation of Richelieu as a minister, and even as a man, must have been very predominant in the next generation for writers to have spoken of these men with indulgence; for surely none were ever guilty of a more foul and unprovoked treason; Cinq Mars himself did not even pretend to have a single wrong to complain of; neither did De Thou; De Bouillon had recently received pardon for one unprovoked rebellion, and Orleans had been forgiven over and over again. Nor is it easy to conceive what any one of them expected to gain by their treason, if we except Cinq Mars, who was impelled by vanity and ambition to desire an office of which he had no intention whatever of discharging one of the duties, nor the capacity to do so, had he been ever so well disposed. Of all the outbreaks which took place in France in that age, not one was more causeless or more criminal. Its chastisement was the cardinal's last act. His health had never been strong, and, though he was still only in middle age, his constitution was completely worn out. Throughout the year he had been a great sufferer from sores and abscesses, which broke out over every part of his body, disabling his limbs, and making every movement a source of almost intolerable pain. After the trial of the conspirators, he was removed to Paris in a litter borne on men's shoulders, since he was unable to bear any other conveyance; and during the protracted journey his nerves also gave way, and he fell into a state of helpless terror,

* "Je pense qu'à ce moment cher ami fait vilaine mine."

constantly expecting to be assassinated by the order of the king, who, as he learnt from his own statement to the judges, had listened to a proposal of his murder without showing any disapproval, and who could never want instruments to execute such a deed. Louis, however, though younger, was almost equally ill; it was plain that he, too, was dying, and the courtiers were speculating on which would be the first to depart. It was, however, on the minister that death first laid his hand. At the beginning of December a pleurisy was added to his other maladies, and on the 4th he died at the age of fifty-seven, having been a minister for above eighteen years, and having been absolute master of the whole power of the Government for twelve.

With all his faults, and they had been neither few nor light, he had been a great statesman. That he had a hard heart and an unscrupulous conscience cannot, indeed, be denied; but he had a genius to conceive a great and consistent scheme of policy, and a force of will and of character which enabled him to persevere in it to the last, and to carry out the greater part of it in spite of difficulties such as few others have ever had to contend with. In the objects which he proposed to himself, he may be compared to two of the most striking characters in our own history; to Strafford and to Chatham. Like him, Strafford desired to place the king above the law, to make him absolute. Chatham was as attached to war, in order to break the power of France, as he was eager by the same means to humble the pride of the House of Austria. Those who admire the energy of our great commoner's administration, can hardly condemn the foreign policy of the cardinal, while for his scheme of domestic government

he had more excuse than the great earl, since, while for four hundred years there had not been a day when an English sovereign had had such power as Strafford strove to create, an almost equal period could be traced in French history since the monarchs of France had established their right to absolute authority, which Richelieu was only seeking to restore. In pursuing these objects, he was beset, as we have said, by unparalleled difficulties; the weak and odious character of the king himself, without one virtue to gain esteem, or one grace to attract popularity, and incapable of giving a steady support even to designs for his own aggrandisement, of which he fully approved; the turbulent spirit of the nobles, ever ready to break out into rebellion, ignorant of the meaning of loyalty, and scorning all obligations of good faith and honesty; to these must be added the lawlessness of the whole nation, from which, as he well knew, not only his authority, but his life also was in constant danger. Yet over all these discouragements and obstacles he triumphed. If, surrounded by them as he was, he sometimes chastised violence with cruelty, and encountered treachery with equal faithlessness, such errors must be admitted to be not altogether without some palliation. From his original purpose he never swerved; and if he was not spared to behold its complete consummation, yet before he died he had laid the foundations so surely, and had made such progress with the superstructure, that the next sovereign had no difficulty in completing the edifice, but, before his reign was half over, had rendered France as predominant over the whole of Europe, and had established his own authority as absolutely over his acquiescent subjects of every rank and class, as Richelieu

himself could have desired. It must be added, on the other hand, as a drawback to his success in these objects, that they were purchased at the cost of the material prosperity of the great body of the people, which diminished in at least as great a degree as the military resources of the nation increased. The comparative comfort to which Sully's administration had raised the labouring classes disappeared under the financial difficulties produced by war. To the burden of increased taxation were added the horrors of military license in those provinces which were the quarters of the different armies; and the misery which drove the Norman peasants into insurrection was but a sample of that which prevailed throughout the greater part of the kingdom. And though we must admire steadfastness of purpose, unshrinking courage, diplomatic skill, comprehensive political foresight, and general force of character, and must admit that such qualities go far to prove their possessor a statesman of the first rank, we must equally pronounce that, however great in these respects Richelieu may have been, his deliberate neglect of his first duty of all, a care for the happiness of the people placed under his authority, forbids us to give him the title of a wise and good minister.

The dying cardinal had indicated Mazarin to Louis as his most fitting successor. It was apparently with this purpose that he had persuaded him, three years before, to leave Rome and establish himself at Paris, and that he had subsequently extorted for him a cardinal's hat from the Pope; and accordingly, the very evening of Richelieu's death, the king installed the Italian in the vacant post, and by every means in his power published his determination to adhere

to the line of policy laid down for him by his late minister. The chief difference seen at first was that the new minister showed a more conciliatory demeanour. Sensible that the king, who had raised him to power, would not long remain to maintain him in it, he was careful to cultivate the goodwill of all classes, and especially to ingratiate himself with the different members of the royal family. He not only sought the favour of the queen, but he also prevailed upon Louis to permit the Duke d'Orleans to return to Paris; and to him, in some degree, it must be ascribed that Louis, when appointing the queen to be regent for their infant son, and nominating a council to assist her, conferred the post of Lieutenant-General of the kingdom on his brother. In the same spirit he released from the Bastille Bassompierre and the other victims of Richelieu's personal dislike; and, above all, to him it was undoubtedly owing that Queen Marie, who had died at Cologne in the summer of 1642, was, at the commencement of the next spring, removed from that foreign city, and reburied, with pomp befitting her rank, in the resting-place of the ancient kings of France at St. Denis.

While departing in points such as these from the rigour of his predecessor, he was eager to show that in graver matters he took him for his model; and, therefore, made ostentatious preparation for continuing the war with energy; and, in making arrangements for the coming campaign, if he was not singularly favoured by fortune, he must be allowed to have displayed a very extraordinary degree of penetration. In raising Turenne to independent command, and placing him at the head of the army of Piedmont, he was only recognising the greatness of

well-tried abilities; but when he sent the Duke d'Enghien, a young prince scarcely of age, as commander-in-chief of the army of Picardy, he was risking the safety of the capital on the courage and conduct of a youth who had served but one campaign, and yet who in a few weeks justified his choice by the most splendid victory that had been won by France over a foreign enemy since a former D'Enghien saved her from invasion at Cerisoles.

Meanwhile Louis was sinking rapidly, and was conscious of the approach of death. As has been already mentioned, he appointed the queen to be regent; and selected a council, composed, besides Mazarin, of the Prince of Condé, Seguier the Chancellor, Chavigny the Secretary of State, and Bouthillier, who had recently succeeded D'Effiat as Superintendent of Finance; and, with a singular species of self-flattery, as if his power were so great that he was able to enforce the observance of his regulations after his death, he strictly forbade the slightest change in the composition of the council, and compelled both his queen and his brother to sign a written promise to maintain all his arrangements, and caused the document to be formally registered by the Parliament. Anne made no open resistance, but at the same time drew up a secret protest against them; and Louis must certainly have known that no promise, written or unwritten, would bind his brother for a moment. Others of the chief princes and nobles gave token that they, too, knew that the king's end was at hand by the way in which they mustered their retainers and flocked to St. Germain, where he was lying, to be at hand to watch over their own interests in the struggle which they anticipated at the

beginning of the new reign; but Louis lingered longer than had been expected. He had adopted the idea that the 24th of April would be his last day; and accordingly on that morning he received the sacrament and extreme unction, and took leave of his children; but he rallied and relapsed more than once, and did not die till the 14th of May, the anniversary of his father's assassination, thirty-three years before.

There is no point of view which can lead the greatest admirer of royalty to respect the memory of Louis XIII. The few respectable qualities which he had were altogether neutralized by corresponding defects, while to those vices for which he had energy no countervailing set-off is to be found. He was not slow of comprehension; but his feebleness of mind was so incurable that he was always the slave of the judgment or will of others. He was not destitute of courage; but, though fond of war, and often at the head of his armies, he was so utterly deficient in energy that he never distinguished himself by a single military exploit; and the greatest proof of resolution he ever showed was the indifference with which he heard of or witnessed the sufferings of others. The weakness of his constitution did not allow him to imitate the debaucheries of his father; but he exceeded him in his ill-treatment of his queen, and as a son he was even worse than as a husband; while, in his relations to others, he had so little steadiness of principle, or even of feeling, that of love or friendship he was completely incapable. To the commanding genius of Richelieu he owes it that posterity has not assigned him a place among the worst of kings; but though in a constitutional monarchy,

like that established among ourselves, the posthumous reputation of a sovereign must in a great degree depend on the actions and wisdom of his councillors, an absolute monarch cannot be allowed to shine by a borrowed light. To say that such a prince was absolute over the rest of his subjects, but a slave to his minister, is to say that he was a nonentity; and he who is such as a king can hardly fail to be worse as a man.

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